REPORT RESUMES

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WESTERN INTERSTATE CONFERENCE ON MIGRATORY LABOR (PHOENIX, APRIL 10-13, 1960).

BY- MCQUERY, ELTON K

COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF

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A CONFERENCE ON MIGRATORY LABOR WAS HELD IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA ON APRIL 10-13, 1960 TO WHICH OFFICIALS FROM TWELVE WESTERN STATES WERE INVITED. HEADS OF STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH, LABOR AND WELFARE, CHAIRMEN OF STATE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES WHICH DEAL WITH LEGISLATION IN THESE FIELDS, OTHER LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, AND GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEES OR COMMISSIONS ON MIGRATORY LABOR IN STATES WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED WERE INVITED. THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS PRESENT THE GENERAL SESSION SPEECHES, BACKGROUND PANEL SPEECHES, AND PREPARED STATEMENTS PRESENTED DURING THE CLOSING SESSION. (SF)

ED013125

Proceedings

WESTERN INTERSTATE CONFERENCE
ON
MIGRATORY LABOR

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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April 10-13, 1960
Hotel Westward Ho
Phoenix, Arizona

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FOREWORD

The Western Interstate Conference on Migratory Labor was held April 10 - 13, 1960, at Phoenix, Arizona. The Conference met under the auspices of the Western Governors' Conference in cooperation with the American Public Health Association, the President's Committee on Migratory Labor and the Council of State Governments.

Governor Albert D. Rosellini of Washington, Chairman of the Western Governors' Conference, issued letters of invitation to officials of the twelve states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Invited to participate as delegates were the heads of state departments of agriculture, education, employment, health, labor and welfare; chairmen of state legislative committees, both Senate and House, which deal with legislation in these fields; other legislative leaders including House and Senate presiding officers, chairmen of Legislative Councils and Commissions on Interstate Cooperation; and Governor's committees or commissions on migratory labor in states where they have been established. Asked to participate as resource persons were representatives of interested private groups including farm organizations and organized labor, as well as federal and local government officials.

At four general sessions, Conference participants were addressed by United States Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr., of New Jersey, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor; a background panel, the members of which dealt with the various aspects of the problem; Varden Fuller, Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of California, and former Executive Secretary of the President's Commission on Migratory Labor; and Assistant Secretary of Labor Newell Brown. The text of the speakers' remarks is presented in the following pages.

Participants spent the remainder of the time in small discussion groups, each of which represented in membership a cross section of the entire Conference. The small group discussions were not recorded; rather, the Chairmen met and prepared a statement which was presented at the closing general session. A record of the action taken at the closing session is included in the Proceedings.

Elton K. McQuery
Director, Western Office
The Council of State Governments

ALFRED M. POTTS, 2d

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page No.

Program

Welcoming Remarks 1
Governor Paul Fannin

"For a National Task - A National Program" 3
United States Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr.

"Highlights of the Problem" - A Panel Discussion 15

- Willis F. Sloan 15
- Donald Harting 18
- Murray A. Hintz 21
- Alfred M. Potts 22
- Richard Salter 25
- William H. Metzler 28
- Louis Krainock 31
- John Zuckerman 35
- John J. Walsh 40

"Immediate Needs and Ultimate Goals in Migratory Labor Policies" 43
Varden Fuller

Closing Address 47
Assistant Secretary of Labor Newell Brown

Business Session 51

PROGRAM

SUNDAY, APRIL 10

7:00 p.m. DINNER - OPENING SESSION Turquoise Room

Presiding: The Honorable Clarence L. Carpenter
President of the Senate, Arizona

Invocation: Reverend H. B. Lundgren, Director,
Arizona Migrant Ministry

Address: United States Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, Washington, D.C.

Benediction: The Very Reverend Monsignor William J. Quinn
Executive Secretary, Bishops' Committee for Migratory Workers, Illinois

MONDAY, APRIL 11

9:30 a.m. GENERAL SESSION Turquoise Room

Presiding: The Honorable Charles R. Conklin
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Colorado

Welcome: The Honorable Paul Fannin
Governor of Arizona

PANEL DISCUSSION: "HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROBLEM"

Donald Harting, M.D., Chief, Program Development Branch, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C.

Murray A. Hintz, Director of Public Welfare, New Mexico

Louis Krainock, Director of Public Information, AFL-CIO Farm Labor Organizing Committee, California

William H. Metzler, Agricultural Economist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Arizona

Alfred M. Potts, 2d, EdD., Director, Migrant Education Research, State Department of Education, Colorado

Richard Salter, Chief of Farm Placement, State Employment Security Commission, Arizona

Willis F. Sloan, Chief, Domestic Labor Division, U.S. Bureau of Employment Security, Washington, D.C.

John J. Walsh, Executive Director, The President's Committee on Migratory Labor, Washington, D.C.

John Zuckerman, Zuckerman Farms, Inc., Vice President, Council of California Growers, Stockton, California

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

9:30 a.m. **GENERAL SESSION** Turquoise Room

Presiding: The Honorable Wayne Warrington, Chairman, Governor's Advisory Committee on Seasonal Farm Labor, Arizona

Address: The Honorable Varden Fuller, Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of California

10:30 a.m. **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13

9:30 a.m. **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

12:15 p.m. **LUNCHEON - CLOSING SESSION** Turquoise Room

Presiding: The Honorable W. B. Barkley, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture and Irrigation, House of Representatives, Arizona

Invocation: Reverend H. B. Lundgren

Closing Address: The Honorable Newell Brown, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Manpower, Washington, D.C.

Benediction: The Very Reverend Monsignor William J. Quinn

2:30 p.m. **ADJOURNMENT**

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Group I	Chairman:	John F. Henning, Director, Department of Industrial Relations, California	Saratoga Room I
Group II	Chairman:	Representative Bernard J. Gallagher, Washington	Saratoga Room II
Group III	Chairman:	Senator Herrick Roth, Colorado	Ming Room
Group IV	Chairman:	Senator George Parkhouse, Texas	Verde Room
Group V	Chairman:	Senator James A. Cobey, California	Normandy Room
Group VI	Chairman:	Freeman Holmer, Director, Department of Finance and Administration, Oregon	Rose Room

WELCOMING REMARKS

By
The Honorable Paul Fannin
Governor of Arizona

Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen of the conference, it is a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to greet you. We are very pleased and honored to have you here in Arizona.

It is a great pleasure to have here people from so many other states to discuss the need for, and the needs of, migrant farm workers. We are well aware of the problem in our state because a great number of people come to Arizona to work in our agricultural areas and harvest our crops. Our agricultural economy depends to a considerable extent on the influx of farm workers in our peak agricultural seasons. Many of your states, likewise, depend heavily on migratory labor. I am sure you share with me the sense of the tremendous importance of helping these people help themselves. That, I am certain, is the best way to approach the problem.

Having worked in agriculture for some thirty years, I realize very well the problems we have in our farm communities. We recognize the reality and urgency of these questions, or we would not be here. I wish you the very best of success in exploring the many sides of this highly complex problem. There is a great deal of work that needs to be done, but I think, at the same time, we should recognize that in many cases these people have chosen to follow the crops as the kind of work they want to do. Our job, I think, is to help them realize and attain more of the benefits that our civilization affords the great majority of our residents.

There are many ways in which the migrant workers and their families need help, and there are many ways in which we can help them meet their needs. I am impressed with the broad scope and tremendous importance of the work that you have ahead of you. In the matter of education, for instance, we know that the children traveling with their parents from harvest to harvest are entitled to an education. We are determined to provide that education; we have an obligation to do so. Our responsibilities for the education of the children of migrant parents surely are no less than for the education of children of resident parents, wherever they may live and whatever their economic situation. And this is only one aspect of the problem. In its totality, it constitutes an enormous challenge. I commend you on your acceptance of the challenge. I urge that you approach it open-mindedly, objectively, conscious of its size and complexity. If you fully recognize its importance and the difficulty of finding sound solutions, your work here will be rewarding both to yourselves and to the states you represent.

Again, it is a pleasure having you here with us. I would like to add my best wishes for a very successful conference. Thank you.

FOR A NATIONAL TASK - A NATIONAL PROGRAM

By
United States Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor
New Jersey

To be here today is more than an honor. It is an opportunity to meet the men and women with an interest in, and responsibility for, dealing with migrant problems in an area covered by almost one-fourth of the states of our nation.

For the Chairman of a Senate Subcommittee which is less than one year old, today's conference is an excellent way to receive the benefit of your years of experience; we can find ways in which your jobs and mine mesh on the question of migratory workers and those who use the services of those workers.

Men and governments do effective work when there is a goal in sight, and when they are working towards that goal and not away from it. We are here today, I think, to make that common goal a little clearer, a little closer.

We are here to speak up. First to each other; and then to every person who can be persuaded that he, too, has a part to play in remembering the "forgotten people," those "lonely wanderers on the face of our land."

And to do that we should offer a national program for a national task -- one that will put all our resources to work: citizens' interest, state programs, federal agencies, Congress, and the many organizations which have done so much already.

There is no one federal program, or group of federal programs, that will end the problems affecting the migrants, the growers, and the citizens whose lives are affected in one way or another by the migrant.

From what the Subcommittee already has learned, it is clear that individual states can do only part of the job. We know also that private citizens and organizations, however energetic and sympathetic their workers are, look to their legislators and government administrators.

Therefore, we must draw up a balance sheet of responsibility and action. On one side of the sheet should go the details of the job that must be done. On the other side should go a listing of the forces that we can put to work to fight the many problems which you and the Subcommittee know about and some which we may not, even yet, know about.

When we have this fundamental tool -- this worksheet for progress -- then we will have a new perspective and a new impetus. The job is big enough for all, but not so big that we can afford duplication of effort or no effort at all in areas which might be neglected if we concentrate on only a few of the more glaring inadequacies.

And we must remember, I think, that we are dealing with a sick industry. American agriculture is the marvel of the world; even the Soviet Union is willing to admit that our nation can outdo theirs at least in this one segment of our economy. Yet American agriculture is the cause of the single most perplexing domestic problem facing us. The migrants and the growers are caught up in this malaise; no diagnosis of their problems can be separated from the stark fact that most agricultural income is going down, and that we as a nation really don't yet have a good program at work to keep that income from going down even more.

If, therefore, we overlook farm problems and try to make the grower the villain of the migrant worker drama, we shall have jettisoned a basic source of essential understanding and knowledge.

There are no villains and no heroes in the drama. But there should be, and there is, national concern. We must put that concern to work, and that is one reason we are here today in 1960 -- a clearcut case of East meeting West and liking it very much indeed.

And, it seems to me, 1960 is a good year for action.

We're at the start of a new decade. Like the man who makes New Year's resolutions, we feel a need for freshness and change. We could not believe it, if someone were to tell us, that the Sixties could pass with little or no progress on the problems to be described here in the next two days. The fact is, however, that someone has to work hard to make certain that progress is made, and we are part of that force of "someone" who must do the work.

This first year of the Sixties is a year of anniversaries. It is the Silver Jubilee of the great social legislation enacted under the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Twenty-five years have passed since Congress enacted laws to reduce the suffering and distresses caused by unemployment.

Americans watched in 1935, too, as Congress passed the Wagner Act. Here was another historic cornerstone in the structure of laws that express the conscience of our citizens, and their faith in Democratic progress.

The Thirties brought us social security, federal minimum wage legislation, and other bills based on the premise that no man's comfort or profit can be based, even partially, on another man's suffering or exploitation.

All this happened decades ago.

And so, in this great year of 1960, when we are assured that we Americans are living in a happy state of peace and prosperity, when an all-time record of 64 million employed Americans has been established, and when many Americans apparently really believe that this is the best of all possible years in the best of all possible worlds; it certainly behooves us to give special thought to the more than one million migrants who help bring food to our tables and fiber for our garments.

They -- the migrant workers -- could look with some bitterness on another anniversary which could be observed this year. It was just 21 years ago that John Steinbeck wrote the "Grapes of Wrath."

His Dust Bowl is now green; Okies are people of the past. But the open road and the shack by that road are still with us. Children are still dying in the 1960's, in highway tragedies and isolated outbreaks of avoidable illness, and they are dying intellectually too. They are dying in terms of limitations upon their lives -- in education, in progress from one generation to the next, in their outlook and belief in the improvability of themselves or the children who will follow them. We have waste, and we cannot afford waste. It takes too great a toll of national conscience and national strength.

Suffering persists among the migrants who have taken to the road since World War II. County health officers shake their heads as they tell the Subcommittee about the ditch used for drinking water or the child who knows no cleanliness. Teachers tell us how they make a little education go far, but they also tell us how much farther they have to go. Growers are not proud about much of the housing they offer, but they don't know how they can provide more. Migrant man and wife count their money at the end of a season and find that their earnings are only in the hundreds of dollars.

As for the future, there is little reason to think of it because the present is so hard.

Who are these migrants? What do they do for our nation?

A 1959 series of articles in the WASHINGTON POST and TIMES HERALD on the migratory worker in Maryland starts off with these words:

"Tally McNeil lives in a dingy, one-room shack on the Eastern Shore with his pregnant wife, five children and his worries.

"They share three cots, a two-burner stove and a gnawing uncertainty over where the next dollar will come from.

" 'In the last two days I ain't picked more than $2 worth of tomatoes,' said Tally, head hunched between his husky shoulders. 'That don't buy us much.'

"This summer the shore has been hit by a devastating combination of drought and heavy rain. Because of the weather, there has been only half the usual crop of tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and peppers.

"Nevertheless, Tally McNeil, his parents, five brothers and two sisters will be back from Pompany, Fla., next year to gamble again with nature, just as they have for the last 11 years."

Our Subcommittee's early studies indicate that almost half a million persons are in our domestic migrant forces: the Texas-Americans, the southern Negroes, the Puerto Ricans, the American Indians, and others.

Among the foreign migrants we have approximately 400,000 Mexican braceros and 12,000 British West Indians. Smaller numbers of Canadians and Japanese have worked in the fields.

If we were to add the wives and youngsters who travel but who do not work with the men, we would have to add hundreds of thousands more to the number of persons who live the migrant way of life in this nation.

All in all, there are at least 22 of our states which depend on a skilled or semi-skilled labor force ranging from 6,000 to 205,000 persons to harvest their perishable fruits and vegetables. And their skills must often be quite varied.

A president of a large New Jersey farm has said that:

"I think, actually, that the average farm laborer requires a great deal more skill and a much wider range of skill than the average industrial worker does. Conditions on a farm are such that the job content changes constantly. You can't break a farm job down into a series of repetitive, easily supervised operations like you can a factory job. I'm an engineer; I've run quite a few factories and I've run quite a few farms. I've never seen an honest job evaluation yet that didn't come to the conclusion that the farm job ought to be paid more than the factory job."

In Arizona, the migrant might work on citrus and cotton; in California, on peaches, nuts, cotton, and strawberries; in Colorado, sugar beets and cherries; in Connecticut, tobacco; in Georgia, appropriately enough, on peaches; in Idaho, potatoes; in Illinois, peas; and so the story goes. Each state has, with some exceptions, produced the crops most adaptable to its soil and climatic conditions.

As Professor Daniel H. Pollitt of the University of North Carolina has said in a study prepared for our Subcommittee:

"These crops enrich our diet and our level of living. The sale of these crops brings important revenues to the states; the average cumulative payroll of the migrants is substantial. If for no other reason than this economic one, the welfare of the migrant is worthy of investigation and improvement."

Of course, you here today are interested in more than economics. The very sponsorship of this conference, and the variety of government agencies represented in the audience, indicate how widespread these interests are.

Work of the Subcommittee

Already I've referred to the Senate Subcommittee a few times. Let me tell you a little more about it and then discuss the part the Subcommittee could play in the national program I discussed earlier.

The Subcommittee was created last August. Two Senators from the West -- James E. Murray of Montana and Barry Goldwater of this state -- are among the members. The others are Jennings Randolph of West Virginia and Jacob K. Javits of New York.

At its very inception, the Subcommittee had before it three bills which had been under consideration by the full Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

One, S. 1778, would require registration of crew leaders to protect workers and growers against the occasional unscrupulous labor contractor -- the man who makes work arrangements between farmer and migrant.

Another, S. 2141, would extend child labor provisions to migrant youngsters. Two very fine western Senators, Murray of Montana and Yarborough of Texas, are among the co-sponsors.

S. 1085 would bring the migrant workers under minimum wage protection.

As soon as I was named Chairman, I introduced another crew registration bill. It had more detailed standards by which activities of crew leaders could be measured, whereas the earlier bill leaves a large discretionary area to be handled through regulations by the Department of Labor.

We began hearings in Washington last summer. The Department of Labor sent witnesses, and so did the Department of Agriculture. Even though, as you well know, there are differences of opinion between these two Departments, their witnesses did try to give constructive testimony. I am disappointed, however, about the failure of the Department of Labor to follow up the testimony with additional statements about specific legislation. Except for the crew leader bills, which they approve, the Department of Labor and the Department of Agriculture have thus far taken no position on the pending bills. Perhaps after the Departments have resolved their family feud, they will come forward with meaningful help and concrete legislative recommendations.

In October, the Subcommittee went to Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. We went out into the fields and had our first look at some housing that was fairly good and other housing that was unbelievably -- shall I say, primitive? That's a polite word.

In New Jersey in December, we found that bad housing is not limited to any one state or group of states. We also visited New York and Pennsylvania, and our witnesses included everyone from Eleanor Roosevelt to three crew leaders who send their workers in buses every morning from the streets of Philadelphia to fields 20 and 30 miles away.

To bring you up to date, we thought a few weeks ago that the Subcommittee would spend four days on field trips and hearings in the vegetable belt of Florida. The round-the-clock debate of a few weeks ago -- known in some quarters as a filibuster -- has forced us to postpone that trip.

As things stand now, we may soon have another round of Washington hearings. After that, we hope to reschedule the Florida hearings and also conduct a California hearing in middle or late July.

As a result of our early journeys, I introduced three bills in January. In some ways these bills -- two on education and one on housing for migrants -- are the essential foundation for other legislation, and I'd like to discuss them briefly.

Incidentally, I'd like to take a moment to thank any of you who may have been at the White House Conference on Children and Youth last week. A Forum at that conference endorsed the housing and education bills in principle, as well as other proposals now before the Subcommittee.

Key Problems -- Housing and Education

The White House Forum paid particular attention to education for migrants, and so will I.

One of the bills I introduced on January 20 would, in very brief terms, do these things:

1. The Federal Government would help bear the additional cost of educating these children during regular school sessions. Funds would be provided to pay 75 per cent of the state's cost of educating the child for each day of attendance.

The federal share of 75 per cent would be maintained for the first two years; thereafter, the federal share would be 50 per cent of the cost.

2. Another section of the bill would help communities pay the extra expense of educating migrant youngsters in special summer school sessions; $300,000 in grants would be available annually for this purpose over a 5-year period. Institutions of higher education programs would be eligible to sponsor a summer school under this part of the program.

3. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars annually, for five years, would be earmarked for state planning grants to encourage interstate cooperation and fact-gathering on educational programs. In other words, if Arizona has a good program, Idaho and New Jersey need to know about it.

Not only would this program encourage fact-gathering; it would encourage fact-trading. Our hearings and field trips have convinced me that this could be a very valuable program.

All three programs proposed in this first education bill would, when added together, cost only about $2 million a year.

In terms of missiles or farm surplus storage costs, this is not much money. In terms of positive good to a large number of citizens, it is an impressive sum. Only youngsters of domestic migrant workers would participate in this program. Braceros live bachelor lives, I'm told, and do not have their children with them.

Youngsters aren't the only ones who would benefit from better education. Adult migrants can profit also.

The second bill I introduced on January 20 is the direct result of talks I have had with growers, public health officials and others.

Perhaps the strongest and most justifiable complaint expressed by growers again and again is the one which I'll paraphrase like this:

"Well, I've done a lot of things to improve the welfare of migrants on my farm. I've built them new housing, put in toilet facilities, new showers, cooking facilities, nice new bedding, plenty of garbage cans. And what happens? They mark up the walls, kick holes in the window screens, stop up the toilets, pull the knobs off the showers and stoves, tear the blankets, and tip over the garbage cans."

The farmer has a right to his hurt feelings and his resentment; often he has stretched his thin profits a little thinner so that he could build better quarters. Sometimes the migrant for whom the facilities were built, however, didn't even know what the facilities were for.

The root problem here is a lack of education in fundamentals of modern living. And it is to this problem that the second bill is directed. It would authorize $250,000 annually for five years for a program of practical education for the workers themselves, and it would follow the path so successfully blazed by the Cooperative Extension Service, which now combines the efforts of some 11,000 county extension workers and 1.2 million voluntary local leaders to provide information about home economics and agricultural methods to more than 12 million persons.

You know, when you talk about education, you sometimes have a feeling of which-came-first-the-chicken-or-the-egg.

If children receive proper education, won't child labor legislation be more effective? Or is it the other way -- if a child does not have a school to go to, what does it benefit him to be forced from the fields. The same question arises about minimum wages. Unless adults are given some instruction in the benefits of good, healthful living, won't he lose some of the advantages that extra dollars in his pockets could give him?

In Fredericksburg, Virginia, last month, I spoke before a group of church women. Though they were genteel, they had a hardbitten appreciation of migrant problems -- the kind of understanding possible only to those who have actually seen the migrants in their home camps. Their biggest response of the day came when I described the education bills; they seemed to believe that schooling is the big first step forward.

Let me say here, too, that educational opportunities have been seized upon by migrants wherever they have been offered, to judge by what we have seen or heard about so far. The usual experience is that a summer school has more students each year; and the children look forward to the school session as one of the enjoyable parts of their journeys to other states.

There was, for instance, a report we received at our hearings in Michigan. A superintendent of schools told about a 5-week demonstration summer school there. I'll read one paragraph:

"I have never found a nicer group of children to work with. For the most part, they were smart children, eager to learn, appreciative, and loved books. Somewhere they have either learned good work habits in school or are just that eager to learn...many were constantly reading or looking at books... From their conversation it was very evident that they were happy with the opportunity to go to such a school and also to be able to ride to and from school in the bus."

One of the little girls who went to a Michigan summer school wrote back to her teacher friends in Michigan. She said, among other things:

"Just a few lines to say that I am missing you a lot. I have started school already but I don't like it as much as I liked that school over there. My teacher over here is Mrs. Price and every day she buys a can of candy from Laura a girl that I know for $8 but you didn't buy us any but you are still the goodest teacher I have had and you will be. Well I guess that's all for now. By-by, hope you get to come over here where it's warm. Your friend and yours truly.

May Ann Castilleja

Mary Ann still has to brush up a little on her grammar, but I think her enthusiasm for education is just about perfect.

You here today know about many of the state schools established to promote migrant education: the $50,000 pilot plant in Oregon, Ohio's $175,000 reimbursement program to school districts, action in New York and in New Jersey. I think that you must be interested in the 3-year study of special educational problems underway in Colorado, with the help of the U.S. Office of Education. Texas and Wisconsin are trying to find a good way to determine the educational needs of each child in the home district of that child and then transmitting that information to another state. Wisconsin could thus, for example, be in a position to give the child the educational program he should have when he arrives.

These and other efforts point up the need all the more, I think, for coordination, exchange of information, and encouragement from federal levels down to the local school board level. It would be shameful, in this day of massive emphasis on educational improvement, if we were to permit this educational lag to continue among large numbers of these migrant youth. We do know that the lag is there; one study, for example, estimates that more than 50 per cent of 100,000 school-age migrants are from one to four years behind in school by the time they reach the age of 14.

The Housing Bills

Encouraging as the educational interest is, it is only part of the picture.

We need good housing, too, but who is to provide it? To many growers, the migrant is a temporary visitor, and the grower frequently believes that the investment in housing should be kept to a minimum, often a very bare minimum. The Subcommittee has seen shacks that have been made almost livable by the migrants -- in one wooden frame hut not too far from Princeton University, a woman was happy when we met her because her husband had just nailed an orange crate to the wall, thus giving her a new shelf.

And the Subcommittee has also seen fairly good buildings which have been almost wrecked within one growing season -- another good illustration, I believe, of the need for the education bill I mentioned earlier.

Growers, of course, are at a disadvantage when they try to finance housing for migrants. Lenders generally don't regard such housing as good mortgage security; the farmer might discover that he would have to mortgage his entire farm to provide shelter for his temporary visitors -- and it would take many arguments to persuade him that this is a wise thing to do.

To help deal with the housing question, I introduced a bill on January 27. The first section would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to insure loans up to $35 million a year for migrant homes. Another section of the bill would authorize direct loans to farmers associations, and state or county governments.

The direct loans could be used for non-profit housing of migrants, and they would come from a $25-million revolving fund to be established by Congressional appropriation.

The bill is intended to help the farmers -- and we have seen them -- who try to provide good housing despite slim profit margins and no assurance that the competitor will provide equally good housing.

We have inspected, for example, camps in which central dining areas were provided, in which rooms were painted in attractive colors, and in which sanitary facilities were new, well-maintained, and adequate. One grower told us that his model camp is a source of pride to him. And he gave one practical reason for being so proud. He said that his camp helps attract a steady supply of skilled workers to his farm each year, thus cutting down his turnover rate and replacement costs.

Other growers have found that improved educational opportunities have the same effect -- workers want to come back year after year because they have found something they want. Sometimes that something is a feeling of growing self-respect and self-understanding.

Housing is a subject of such importance and complexity that I feel the Subcommittee must give it intensive attention. What can be done, for instance, about the migrant who actually owns his own small plot of land? He lives in his makeshift quarters there and goes into the surrounding countryside to harvest crops. You delegates from California, I understand, are fully aware of this problem and will probably agree that it is worth an entire study in itself.

Other Bills Before the Subcommittee

Earlier I briefly described the other bills before the Subcommittee. Each one has its own part to play in any national program on migratory workers.

Take the minimum wage, for instance.

This is a very difficult legislative field, because, in devising such legislation, I think we must give great weight to the fact that the piece-rate system of payment, in many instances, is prized more dearly by the worker than by the employer. In addition, fringe benefits of certain kinds should be taken into account. It is also desirable that such legislation produce an opportunity for orderly adjustment of the wide regional variation in farm worker wages. And, of course, as I have already indicated, we must be ever mindful of the general deterioration in national farm income.

Even though there are substantial problems still to be resolved on the minimum wage question, I believe we have made a good beginning in our study of the minimum wage bill introduced last year by Senator McNamara of Michigan. Senator McNamara's bill, which has considerable merit in my opinion, would apply a minimum wage floor to employees of large farm enterprises.

Under its terms, farm operators employing more than 2,244 man-days of hired farm labor during a calendar year would be required to pay at least 75 cents an hour. This minimum would be adjusted upward to $1 an hour within three years.

Reasonable men may disagree as to detail, such as the size of the farm enterprise to which this law should apply. But I believe that the principle proposed in the bill is sound and should be enacted into law.

You know, the Subcommittee has been asked to do something about minimum wages which, when we first heard it, sounded impossible. Crew leaders and workers, too, asked us to devise a minimum wage standard for piece work rates. Our first reaction was that it was a good trick if anyone could do it, but how to do it? Now we have heard that at least one western state actually makes such a system work, and work very well indeed. I hope to learn more about that system while I am here.

Two bills before the Subcommittee would require registration of crew leaders. All here have probably heard stories about the families who work all season only to find that, after they have paid their "debts" to an unscrupulous crew leader, they have earned only a few hundred dollars, even less than the $892 per year which is the average annual income for all migrants.

Senator Javits of New York introduced the Administration bill for crew leader registration; I have introduced a more comprehensive bill calling for greater control of these labor contractors.

The final bill now under consideration asks for child labor protection among migrants. I was startled last week when a magazine interviewer said she had heard from "informed sources" that it might take ten years for such a bill to pass. I can't imagine that anyone could stand for such a postponement of the inevitable and the imminent. The day is fast coming for this basic reform.

Unfortunately -- and this is particularly unfortunate because the American Public Health Association is one of the sponsors of this Conference -- the Subcommittee as yet has no specific proposals for betterment of health conditions among migrants. I think it is obvious, though, that the federal role in this field should go far beyond mere technical advice and assistance. It's time to put to work the lessons we have learned through pilot projects and local demonstrations. We intend to take a close look at health problems among migrants, and to find out what should be done that isn't being done already.

A National Problem

As you may realize from this summary, the Subcommittee still has much work to do, but its work won't mean much -- as I said earlier -- unless you and others elsewhere can define the role which you should play.

A great deal of thought, for instance, has already been given this problem by federal administrative officials. And, to judge from the events of recent weeks, much more thought is yet to be given.

But the Administration should decide where it's going, and so should Congress. So should the states. So should every county agent or school teacher, or social worker, or just plain citizen who has become concerned about the migrants.

Growers, I think, have a special responsibility. They have not asked for the problems that come with the migrant, but the problems exist, all the same. As long as growers have peak labor needs -- and call upon migrants to meet those needs -- he, the grower, can't disassociate himself from some of the consequences which arise because he needs seasonal help.

As I said before, the Subcommittee has already received much clear-sighted appraisal and cooperation from farmers. We're going to need more as we go on with our job.

The fact is that reforms and improvements will come with the growers' help or without it. But, from the growers' viewpoint and the viewpoint of everybody else, it would be better if the farm contributes to that change and believes in it.

But I repeat, the improvements will be made, with such help from growers or without it.

I have already mentioned that the average citizen looks to his legislators and government administrators for help. Let me make it clear, too, that we shall need the advice and interest of citizens. Their role, in fact, is of the utmost importance.

Unless the small rural community recognizes its responsibility to help educate the migrant child, unless many millions of American believe that they have a direct responsibility whenever a migrant is killed in a highway accident, or whenever an honest proposal is made to correct some of these abuses -- unless, in short, they are concerned -- then the lawmaker and the administrator will not have the kind of support he must have to do the work that is called for.

For a national effort, we need a national program and full use of all the resources, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be here and witness your determination.

I'd like to close, after taking so much of your time, with just a few paragraphs from Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath." He described a different time in history. But from the final lines, you will see why I read it here today:

"And the rain pattered relentlessly down, and the streams broke from their banks and spread out over the country.

"Huddled under sheds, lying in wet hay, the hunger and the fear bred anger. Then boys went out, not to beg, but to steal; and men went out weakly, to try to steal.

"The sheriffs swore in new deputies and ordered new rifles; and the comfortable people in tight houses felt pity at first, and then distaste, and finally hatred for the migrant people.

"In the wet hay of leaking barns babies were born to women who panted with pneumonia. And old people curled up in corners and died that way, so that the coroners could not straighten them. At night the frantic men walked boldly to hen roosts and carried off the squawking chickens. If they were shot at, they did not run, but splashed sullenly away; and if they were hit, they sank tiredly in the mud.

"The rain stopped. On the fields the water stood, reflecting the gray sky, and the land whispered with moving water. And the men came out of the barns, out of the sheds. They squatted on their hams and looked out over the flooded land. And they were silent. And sometimes they talked very quietly.

"No work till spring. No work.

"And if no work - no money, no food.

"Fella had a team of horses, had to use 'em to plow an' cultivate an' mow, wouldn't think a turnin' 'em out to starve when they wasn't workin'.

"Them's horses - we're men.

"The women watched the men, watched to see whether the break had come at last. The women stood silently and watched. And where a number of men gathered together, the fear went from their faces, and anger took its place. And the women sighed with relief, for they knew it was all right - the break had not come; and the break would never come as long as fear could turn to wrath.

"Tiny points of grass came through the earth, and in a few days the hills were pale green with the beginning year."

If I might add just one thought, wrath has a kinship to hope because wrath is somehow impossible unless our sense of justice has been offended. And, in every nation where freedom persists and grows, a sense of justice persists and grows, too.

PANEL DISCUSSION: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROBLEM

Notes on Employment and Earnings of Migrants

By
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I. Factors Affecting the Employment of Migrants

Employment of migrant farm labor is influenced by three major labor market considerations: (a) a critical need for hired farm workers for short periods of the year; (b) insufficient local labor to meet this need in many areas, requiring recruitment and utilization of non-local workers; and (c) the availability of a supply of workers willing to leave their homes for short-term farm jobs. These conditions are likely to continue for a long time. Each is taken up separately below.

A. Need for Hired Farm Workers for Short Periods of the Year

1. Reliance on hired labor is increasing as family farms are consolidated into larger commercial units. Changing consumption patterns are contributing to increased production of citrus fruits, vegetables, and livestock which have high hired labor requirements. Due to the end of the soil bank and the introduction of "Option B," cotton acreage has expanded. The cotton crop has the highest seasonal labor requirements.

2. At the same time, periods of labor needs are becoming shorter.

   a. Mechanization of many phases of crop production has limited labor needs to the remaining activities which have not yet been mechanized; e.g., sugar beet cultivation, vegetable harvests.

   b. Employers are tyring to speed up harvesting to take advantage of the most favorable market and weather conditions.

   c. Products formerly produced on farms by farm labor have been replaced by farm inputs purchased from off-farm sources; e.g., fertilizers, fuels, tractors.

   d. Farms are becoming increasingly specialized, producing only one or two crops instead of a number of crops which provided longer employment.

B. Local Labor is Insufficient to Meet Short-Term Farm Labor Needs

1. Because farm work is seasonal and relatively low-paid, local workers prefer non-farm jobs. Those who accept farm work are increasingly drawn from housewives, youth and other persons marginal to the labor force. In many areas, the help of domestic migrants and foreign workers has become essential.

2. The farm population is decreasing rapidly. There are fewer people living on farms to take care of farm labor needs. Also, more and more

farm residents have been turning to off-farm work.

3. Cotton and vegetable production has been shifting to sparsely populated southwestern areas with insufficient local labor.

C. Availability of a Migrant Labor Supply

1. The decrease in the number of family farms and the trend away from tenant farming, particularly in the Southeast, have released a supply of workers who lack nonfarm skills and who participate in the migratory streams until they can make some better adjustments.
2. The supply of Spanish-American migrants from states along the Mexican border, which is of particular interest in the western region, is continuously replenished by migrants from Mexico.
3. Chronically depressed rural areas continue to furnish migrant workers.
4. The sharp differential between average farm wage rates paid in the south central states and other labor supply areas ($.40 - $.50 per hour) and the higher rates paid in most of the western states ($.75 - $1.00 or more per hour) continue to attract migratory workers to the latter area.
5. Low earnings and high unemployment among farm workers make it necessary to piece together short-term jobs in different areas.
6. The most important factor affecting the supply of migrant workers is the availability of nonfarm job opportunities. This depends on the general level of prosperity and on the degree of agricultural and industrial development in labor supply areas.

II. Approaches to Solve Migrant Labor Problem

A. On the one hand, we have large farm labor shortages in the western states. On the other hand, we have areas of chronic farm underemployment, primarily in the southeastern states. Although the Rural Development Program is making progress in the chronically depressed rural areas, many underemployed workers from these areas might be willing to move on a permanent basis to western, labor-shortage areas. This would benefit both sections of the country and reduce the problems of migrancy and of meeting labor needs. In particular, sections of western states which have a very long agricultural season, as in California, offer opportunity for this type of permanent population shift. Problems of housing, transportation arrangements, and an attractive wage level are involved in this type of approach.

B. There is a need for organizing a more rational labor market for migrant workers, to reduce the uncertainties of both workers and employers. A few states already require the registration of crew leaders or labor contractors, and there is federal legislation pending in this area. Also, BES revised interstate recruitment regulations. The Annual Worker Plan requires substantial expansion in the western region. (During 1959, only 261 migrant groups containing 4,647 persons were contacted under the plan in the western states.) The growth of employer associations holds out a possible means of providing more continuous employment of migrants.

C. There is a tremendous need to solve problems of occupational retraining and readjustment of the continous stream of people who are leaving the on-farm population.

D. Approaches to the problem of low earnings and high underemployment under study in the Department include federal minimum wage legislation and extension of unemployment insurance to farm labor. Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell said today that a report will be released by the Department of Labor at the end of this month that "will show that a minimum wage for hired farm workers is both feasible and desirable."

"It will also show," the Secretary continued, "that such a minimum would apply to a relatively small percentage of farm employers, all of them large, who hire a substantial portion of the hired farm help in the United States, and would not apply to the small family farmer."

The Secretary also pledged that the Department of Labor "will make recommendations to the Congress for improving the operation of the Mexican Farm Labor Program before the present law runs out" and stated that it is the Department of Labor's "position that Public Law 78 should not be extended unless and until adequate remedial measures are adopted and substantial improvements are made in the program."

E. The Department is constantly improving measures to control adverse effects of foreign labor programs. To meet shortages, we are in danger of becoming dependent upon one-half million foreign workers each year. This is an anomalous situation -- unique in our history for the last 100 years, attended with problems that have impact on the farm labor market.

III. Extent of Migrant Worker Employment

In 1958, about 4.2 million persons worked on farms for wages. Of this number, 1.9 million put in less than 25 days during the year.

Approximately 400,000 persons are migratory farm workers during the year. They are accompanied by as many as 150,000 non-working family members.

Most migratory workers follow well defined routes which take them from their home areas to labor demand areas. In the western states, one major stream involving some 100,000 workers works in crops along the Pacific Coast from Southern California to Washington. Another substantial stream of workers, primarily of Mexican descent, moves from Texas northward and westward into the western states to cultivate sugar beets and to gather fruits, vegetables and cotton. There are also smaller streams supplementing these patterns.

In the period of peak employment during 1959, almost 110,000 migrants were working in the western states, almost evenly divided between those of interstate and intrastate origin. Peak employment of migrants in California (August 31) totaled about 60,000. Oregon and Washington each employed about 20,000 at the end of June, and 10,000 worked in Colorado at the end of August. Migrants were also an important part of the work force in every other western state.

Peak employment of foreign workers in the region occurred around October 1, when 117,000 were reported. All but 1,500 Japanese and Filipinos came from Mexico.

IV. Earnings of Migrants

Earnings of migrant farm workers in the western region averaged $1,232 for 158 days of farm work during 1957. The average migrant earned another $222 for 28 days of non-farm work. From these relatively low earnings, most migrants had to pay the cost of transportation. Substantial underemployment is indicated by comparing the 186 days of work put in by migrants with the potential 250 working days during the year. However, migrants in the West had higher earnings and a longer duration of employment than migrants in other regions in 1957.

Health and Sanitation

By

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American families hardly realize the extent of the protective health services that surround most of them. People become concerned about safe drinking water, safe methods of excreta disposal, and easy access to medical and hospital care only when these are jeopardized by an emergency.

Migrant farm families, on the other hand, often work and live outside the range of protective services. They move from place to place, subject to needless illnesses and accidents arising from makeshift housing, makeshift means of transportation, lack of safe play space for their children, and lack of protection against hazards connected with their work.

Year after year, many migrant families return to work in the same crops in the same places, yet each place considers them "outsiders." In most communities, only permanent residents can qualify for some local services -- such as tax-supported medical and hospital care for the needy. Other health services, theoretically "available" to all persons, are unlikely to reach migrant families because they move so often and are geographically and socially isolated. They may also have health beliefs and practices that differ from those of most American families so that they do not seek the usual community health services. Furthermore, local health services in most communities -- planned, financed and staffed to meet the needs of permanent residents -- are seldom geared to serve families who are "here today and gone tomorrow."

Only two weeks ago, a public health nurse in a Florida county told us about her everyday frustrations in trying to reach seasonal farm-worker families. Her county has a consistent record for many years of special effort to meet the needs of its thousands of seasonal farm-worker families.

As we talked with her, the nurse remarked, "Migrants are like the proverbial flea -- hard to catch. They go to work early and get home late. Home visiting, as it is usually done by public health nurses, doesn't fit this group. The times when mothers can be found at home are very few -- if they are too ill to work, have a new baby, or are taking a day off to do the family wash. ...Sometimes appointments are made, but in order to keep an appointment, the migrant may have to lose a day from work. Since the migrant is low man on the economic totem pole, one hesitates to ask him to give up even a day's pay."

The nurse added: "The fact that home may be a single room for the entire family also presents special problems to the nurse who makes a home visit. Her arrival is "the signal for the neighbors and the children to gather around. This is mostly a bid for sociability in which migrant families' lives are meager."

In spite of her comments on the many difficulties, this nurse firmly believed that "home visits are important for both the nurse and the patient. They give the patient the feeling that someone is genuinely interested in him; they give the nurse a view of the patient in his daily environment. ..."

Last year we had an opportunity to learn about health and sanitation problems from the point of view of the migrant himself. We employed a temporary staff member to interview a selected group of Spanish-speaking migrant families at the end of their year's cycle back at their homes in Texas. Interestingly -- and contrary to our expectations -- all the people we had contacted a year earlier could be located again in their Texas homes.

A packing shed worker told our interviewer about a work area where "conditions are filthy and the gnats and mosquitoes are terrible in and around the packing sheds and the houses of the workers." In contrast, a trucker's wife told about the conditions provided by a canning company for which the crew has done seasonal work for 12 years. In her words: "The company provides everything in the houses for the workers. We have good privies, stoves and electricity. The camp is kept clean by the company, which provides a janitor for this purpose."

One trucker commented: "They do not like the Spanish in the northland." He had stopped his truck in a lighted place near a service station so that his passengers could get some sleep before morning. The service station manager told them to move on.

Others also spoke of their rejection by northern communities. One family refused to return to a northern community where only one local grocery store would let them come in. Another described vividly a traumatic experience when they could not get emergency medical help for a sick child until they had been able to reach their employer, and he had intervened on their behalf. In spite of long-standing relationships with this employer and their great gratitude to him for his help, they will not return to that work area because they fear that they might again have difficulty in getting medical aid when it is greatly needed.

A migrant mother told our interviewer: "The children sicken many times on the road or at the work camps." Sometimes she herself or the grandmother will use a home remedy to cure folk-diagnosed illnesses such as "evil eye." The need for medical care may go unrecognized until it is too late.

We have thought that migration itself might be a factor which tends to select the healthy and leave the more sickly at home. However, our interviews showed that family pressures to stay together and maintain family unity are exceedingly strong in many migrant families. They may also lack transportation of their own and depend completely on the owner of a truck or bus to take them north. Separation might be for an entire season with little or no contact between family members during the intervening period. An illustration of this pressure to maintain family unity comes from an interview with a family which had a sick baby in the hospital recovering from pneumonia. They took the baby out of the hospital when the trucker was ready to go. In the North, the child got worse, was taken to a hospital, but died on the fourth day after the family's arrival.

Anecdotal reports from your own states also describe health and sanitation conditions from the migrant's point of view. Thus, migrant women interviewed about their working conditions in a western state said: "There were no rest rooms in the fields where we worked last season. We went down the row far away where there was nobody working and nobody could see us. The women do not like to work in the fields because of this." According to another report, "This year I worked in the fields, topping onions. The toilet was a half-mile away. It was filled-up and filthy. The fields were better. In another place, there was a toilet, but it had no doors, so we never used it."

Workers in the Migrant Ministry reported experiences during a recent season in California. One described the following family situation: "The husband was put in jail for drunken driving...The wife and five children are living in a cold cabin. County welfare gave them flour, corn meal and canned milk. Two children of school age cannot attend school because they have no shoes or coats. One has an open burn on his leg and open sores on his neck. A doctor has not been consulted. Mrs. A. does not drive and therefore has no way to get to the clinic."

"People with cars charge $1 a ride," according to another family interview. "This is a lot when there's no work anywhere."

Rampant diarrhea among babies, especially at certain seasons, and lack of access to hospitals are common complaints among those migrant families who recognize diarrhea as an illness requiring medical care. Others, however, fail to understand that diarrheal disease is a major cause of death among young infants. They persist in caring for it by home remedies because they have not yet been educated to accept it as a condition requiring modern medical care.

Certain common threads run through many reports of migrant health and sanitation. With these in mind, the Migrant Health Committee of the Western Branch of the American Public Health Association, one of the cosponsors of this conference, listed the following items for conference discussion at their meeting last December:

1. The sanitation and safety of workers and family members in their homes, in the buses and trucks that transport them and in the fields and packing houses.

2. The real availability of protective services and of emergency care in terms of distance of facilities from migrant families, hours of operation, and availability of transportation.

3. Community acceptance of farm worker families.

4. The availability of health workers with the necessary background to work effectively with the cultural groups from which migrant workers are drawn.

5. Methods of financing health services, including medical care.

6. Provision for communication -- interagency and interstate -- to facilitate planning and programming so that continuity of health services will be possible.

7. The responsibility that needs to be assumed for their own health by the worker and his family, and the share to be borne by employers and by the community -- local, state and national -- which depend upon migrant labor.

In all of our discussions, we will have a cardinal need for flexibility of outlook and planning. We have learned by long experience that traditional ruts lead nowhere. We need to "think anew and act anew" if we are to be effective in laying a floor of health services for the seasonal farm worker population like that now provided for most of the nation's people.

We might as well frankly admit that our motives are not wholly altruistic as we pursue our discussion, since (1) the health of farm workers as food handlers is important to all of us; (2) workers in good health are more productive; and (3) migrant families are potentially local community citizens. More and more families settle in our local communities, leaving the farm labor demand to be met by new recruits. The families that settle are likely to be healthier, more useful local citizens if they have not been permitted to suffer handicaps in getting health services and medical attention while they work as seasonal migrants.

"A major roadblock to solving the health problems of seasonal farm workers," warns a physician who works closely with the group, "is the ease with which we can, if we let ourselves, pass the problem on to someone else, and not tackle it as it must be tackled -- as a community health problem."

Public Welfare Services for Migrant Workers in New Mexico

By
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The migrant worker is the "forgotten man" in the public welfare field in the majority of states. The migrant worker is a welcome, sought-after commodity when seasonal laborers are needed. But an unemployed or a sick and needy migrant is a non-resident!

In New Mexico, the Department of Public Welfare has no facilities for the able-bodied, unemployed, single migrant worker. If he has a family, wife and minor children, we will treat him as a needy transient and give 14 days emergency relief -- enough to enable him to continue on his way or to exist until we can secure authorization for his return to his state of verified legal residence.

This aid, which averages $38 per family for approximately 50 families a month, is granted through our state-financed general assistance program. New Mexico is financially unable to offer welfare assistance or services except in individual cases of unusual or desperate need to migratory laborers and their families.

New Mexico's general assistance program is inadequate even for our temporarily ill and unemployable resident clients.

No assistance, other than surplus commodities and one month's emergency grant of general assistance, is available for unemployed but employable workers and their families.

New Mexico, however, has only a one-year residence requirement, and it is my understanding that other states represented here have a three- to five-year residence requirement.

County funds for welfare services are extremely limited, and under no circumstances could local authorities meet the migrant labor problems where use of seasonal labor is heavy, running around 8,000 workers in New Mexico's three southern border counties in the cotton picking season.

New Mexico also has another aspect of the migratory labor problem to contend with annually. That is the families of migrant workers who are left behind and claim desertion when the father goes to Montana as a sheepherder or to the beet fields in Colorado, Idaho and Utah. The families are without funds; it is a case of non-support. If we cannot locate the man, we have to grant ADC until he returns in the fall.

On the other hand, New Mexico has a large Spanish-American and Indian population composed largely of unskilled laborers. From this group, the New Mexico Employment Service recruits laborers for seasonal work in agriculture and other industry, specifically track-maintenance laborers for railroads, throughout the western states. This seasonal employment is the only work opportunity available for the majority of these people; it lightens the welfare load of New Mexico to a decided extent.

Other western states may have more funds for welfare than new Mexico, but when the number of migratory laborers is counted in the 10,000's, the situation is relatively the same.

A partial solution might be found in provision for federal participation in the general assistance program, with removal of all residence restrictions.

Prevention of the problems might be found in better planning, organization and regulation on a regional basis of the use of migratory labor, with all federal, state and local agencies involved working with employers as a team to insure a labor force as needed and to insure the workers human dignity and proper security.

Roadside School Bells Are Your Challenge

By
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Let us consider briefly the problem of education for the agricultural migratory children of our western states. We are all reasonably aware of the general life pattern of these people. This pattern creates many situations detrimental to the physical health, the mental health and the emotional well-being of the migratory child. The questions we are here to consider are: What should be done about the education of these children? And what shall be the form, substance, and initiative of our planned method to alleviate the education problem? What should we do and what are we really going to do about it, anyway?

What are some of the chief characteristics we must consider and contend with in creating effective education programs?

The movement of the people must be known. Where are they, and in what numbers, at what particular times in our state? Are they here when we can get them into the regular schools? Are they here in the summer when make-up schools can be organized for them? Are we or aren't we going to assume a full educational responsibility for them?

The composition and characteristics of the migrant labor families that frequent our areas of responsibility must be known. Is it necessary for the community to encourage school attendance? Or, will they respond of their own initiative? Is your migrant group, like Colorado's, composed of 76 per cent Spanish-culture people, 5 per cent Indians, the remainder Anglos? Do you know enough about the cultural characteristics, the language problem, for teachers to handle the children effectively? Is there an appreciation of the extent of that knowledge needed by teachers in creating an educational readiness in the migrant child? Above and beyond subject proficiency, she must possess an inordinate amount of interest, understanding and patience to serve this child properly.

So, of what is the problem constituted? The child moves excessively. He may be in one school only a few days or a few weeks. The charge to the school then is to make the very most of the time the child is there. School personnel must not have the attitude that nothing can be done in so short a time. A state of familiar feeling must be created in the child as soon as possible.

The family is of poor economic status. This must be appreciated by school personnel and allowance made for the child who stays out of school three days in a week. Though we don't condone this circumstance, we cannot condemn the child for action that is beyond his power to control.

His health is not robust. So we give him rest. We give him a nourishing hot lunch.

He speaks only Spanish. We patiently teach him the English words and the American concepts.

He is not socialized. He does not know how nor does he care to share. We teach him how to play and associate with others.

Yes, we need to know about these people. Who are they? Where do they come from? Our Colorado survey of migrant children in the summer schools has given us many facts that are helpful to education programs. For example, 26 per cent of our migrant children are from our own state. Our studies have made us suddenly realize that we have far too many age-grade retarded children in Colorado. Not only out-of-state children, but our own, too, are losing status because of migrancy.

Where do our other migrant children come from? Colorado attracts, in the main, one-season workers from the states south of it, and around it to the eastward and northward. Few are of the itinerant, completely homeless group -- perhaps one per cent. The others claim to have permanent homes to which they return after the season or after a one-crop trip. Few work in more than three locations a year while on the road.

An observation that came out of these studies is that the movement of the Spanish-culture people is constantly from south to north. More than 15 per cent of the parents of these children were born in old Mexico, but well under one per cent of the children were Mexican born. When asked about resettling, the Spanish-culture migrant answers always that the people move from a southern border state to one in the next tier northward.

There are close family ties, particularly among the Spanish-culture migrants. In a group of 339 migrant children, 89 per cent lived with both parents, 11 per cent with one parent, or grandparents, but not a single child lived with non-relatives.

The Colorado migrant families are fairly large -- averaging 5.8 children each.

The occupational skills of migrants are truly limited. We found that all the Spanish-background fathers were prepared to do only unskilled labor. Among the Anglos, there was a variety of primary and secondary skills. The same situations applied among the mothers.

Of all the families represented in our migrant school during one year, we learned that 43 per cent of them owned their own homes. This compared with 58 per cent for the region involved.

Thus, we see there are matters about the population of our concern which require careful investigation. Knowledges may be gained that have tremendous import in the formulation of education programs for the children.

How many of our western states now have deliberate, extra programs designed for these children? Oregon is developing a program. California has spots of successful endeavor. Colorado has tackled the problem. Texas has a new program designed to teach some basic English to pre-school children. The idea is to improve their state of readiness for their first year of school. Other states are giving spot emphasis to the problems of migrant education. Our combined efforts, however, add up to a spottiness that does not permit continuity for these children as they move about.

We need a program that is consistently regional in operation and patterned across each state wherever migrants may assemble. How shall we accomplish such a uniformity? Only by the several states' representatives sitting down, as we shall do here, and deliberately, purposefully devising plans, and agreeing upon their implementation. The implementation may take time, but the organization is a preliminary requisite, and the initiative of dedicated persons is needed to inaugurate and continue effective programs.

Now, what must we do while assembled here? First, a determination of purpose must be made. What is the purpose in educating these children? Shall a major attempt be made to educate them? Why? If we do it, how must it be done? What shall be the organization of effort state by state? What shall be the content -- and very important -- the methods of the curriculum? How shall we develop the spirit and will to accomplish this job?

Yes, first we must answer the very important question -- for what purpose? Why shall these children be educated? Shall attempt be made to mold all in the Anglo image? Shall dual cultures be cultivated? What does it take to live successfully in our American socio-economic situation? Shall we educate them for their own sakes, to strengthen our society, to increase certain labor forces?

The likelihood is that education programs will be designed to do the traditional American preparation. But the question must be seriously raised -- is this what the group needs and wants? Will the traditional scholastic program suffice to make good, happy, well-adjusted citizens of these children?

Is it not logical that this is the time for a careful analysis of total educational need? On the basis of the analysis, a deliberate planning of method to meet the educational need and to fulfill the well-thought-out purposes may be consummated.

What is the organizational structure of a method to accomplish a regional migrant education pattern?

First, we must know the children. We must consider the factors that involve their physical situation, their cultural ties or lack of them, their personal traits and characteristics.

Upon this knowledge, we must architecture a structure that will cover the entire geographic area of our concern and include all the migratory children who home base in or enter into the area. This should be a structure in which the functions within each state are clearly defined. Each state's organization fulfills the need for its area and for its particular migrant population.

A regional plan that is sound and workable can be suggested to each of the several states. The possibility of developing a total area program will be enhanced if each state knows that certain functions will be its responsibility; that without a local program there will be an unfilled void in the migrant stream education pattern. Purposeful programs have a greater chance of acceptance and implementation than piecemeal, hit-or-miss type of development.

Let us attempt to achieve this regional architectural plan while we are here together. The decision about what you will do here is a matter for early determination by the group that will consider education.

Once your plan of action for the next two days is determined upon, work can be started immediately on the details toward a fulfillment of long-term program planning.

To give us broader perspective in this matter of educating the migratory child, let us place before ourselves the Declaration of the Rights of the Child as approved unanimously by the 14th General Assembly of the United Nations just this past November:

From Article IX: "The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation...

"He shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age..."

And from Article VII: "He shall be given an education which will promote his general culture, and enable him on a basis of equal opportunity to develop his abilities, his individual judgment and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society."

A set of firm proposals for migrant education programs can come from this conference. We know enough about the people to produce sound educational opportunity for them. We know the language problem with the Spanish-cultured; we know that socialization education is as urgent for them as academic education; we know the patterns of travel -- where they will be at certain times.

The immediate problem for this conference is to: (1) decide what we are going to do here; (2) determine upon the broader purposes of intra-regional migrant education programs; and (3) accomplish here and now what we say we are going to do.

With these achievements completed, a major step will be taken. Plans for implementation shall be included as a second step. Then, the utlimate goal of more adequate preparation of migratory children for productive adult living will be within our clear field of vision.

Housing and Transportation

By
Richard Salter
Chief of Farm Placement
State Employment Security Commission
Arizona

We all know that each state has its own problems concerning migratory farm labor, and it should be understood that any statements I make concerning housing and transportation apply basically to Arizona.

We have found in recruiting migratory farm workers through the State Employment Service Annual Worker Plan, that the lack of suitable housing has been a deterrent. We know from statements made to our out-of-state recruiters that more qualified, experienced farm workers would come to Arizona during the fall months if we could assure them housing would be available on their arrival.

In 1957, the Arizona State Employment Service conducted a farm housing study in Maricopa County. This county has more diversified crops and a larger local labor force than any other agricultural county in the state. At the risk of boring you with figures, I will attempt to build a background picture.

Approximately 1,500 farmers in Maricopa County hire farm workers, and of these farmers, approximately 800 hire seasonal migratory farm labor. Field workers in the housing study determined there were 192 on-farm camps in the county. Forty-one camps were utilized by foremen, year-round and non-farm workers, with the balance, 151, available for migratory workers. It was found that there were 1,452 structures in the 151 camps, and of these, 167 were dormitory or barracks type.

Broadly speaking, we considered that approximately two-thirds of the camps would meet the housing standards suggested by the President's Committee on Migratory Labor. Health services, child-care facilities, recreation facilities, and religious services were found available in something less than one-third of the camps.

We found that 68 per cent of the farms with camps had facilities to provide for the workers necessary for peak operations; 32 per cent were unable to house all the workers needed at peak employment. These farmers depended on drive-out crews to get the job done.

The study uncovered the fact that the great majority of the domestic migratory farm workers pay rent for urban housing scattered throughout the county. They arrived on the job each day in their own vehicle or had been picked up in town by a farm truck.

At the end of November 1957, it was estimated that the total number of seasonal farm workers employed in the county was 26,600. The total number of these workers occupying the camps was 9,800. At least 16,000 domestic seasonal farm workers rented urban housing. Let's look at the work force in the 151 camps. There were, in round figures, 10,000 workers, of whom 82 per cent were contracted Mexican nationals, and 18 per cent were domestic workers. Of the total number of persons living in the camps in the domestic migratory group, only 70 per cent were workers. The other 30 per cent were children under 16 years of age and older non-workers. These non-workers are a factor that must be recognized in any consideration of on-farm housing.

You might be interested in the composition of the migratory work force. Workers came to Arizona from 30-35 states. Approximately 45 per cent came from Texas, and 23 per cent from California. About two-thirds of the in-migrants in the past have been free-wheelers, having no prior contact with either farmers or employment services. One-third have had jobs lined up before arrival, and of these, 80 per cent had jobs lined up that included housing. The free-wheelers as a group pose a problem in that many arrive in an area earlier than needed in order to obtain housing but find no work at that time.

One question put to workers in the study concerned their housing preference. These were the answers: 33 per cent of the workers preferred urban housing; 18 per cent preferred small camps holding less than 50 workers; 14 per cent preferred large camps holding over 50 workers; 13 per cent preferred government camps; and 22 per cent were undecided.

Farmers were asked questions as well as workers and here are two of the questions pertinent to our discussion today.

Question #1. "What factors will influence farmers against building or expanding camps in the next few years?" "Mechanization, high building costs, low farm income, fear of undue influence and regulations by government and labor unions, and availability of local workers who do not require on-farm housing," were general statements made by respondents.

Question #2. "What can be done either through private or public means to encourage construction?" The majority of the respondents believed that government financing with a low interest rate and faster tax charge-off would be beneficial. A few expressed the idea that the grower association should encourage members to provide better housing for a better net return. Unfortunately, replies to this latter question were limited in number.

In spite of the picture just painted, housing deficiencies do exist. Dilapidated structures, inadequate sanitary facilities, lack of beds and bedding, fire hazards, unsafe camp grounds and lack of health services affect the health and welfare of many migrant workers. The problem is serious.

Transportation in general has not presented any special problems in this state. In the last three years, the means of transportation provided for farm workers has improved greatly. Transportation from town to the fields or from camp to the fields consists, in the majority of cases, of buses. Many of these are former school and city buses. Buses have been chartered to haul workers to and from the fields. However, there are still instances of workers hauled in trucks.

So much for local transportation; let's take a look at interstate farm labor transportation. ICC regulations have done much to eliminate the unsafe truck. Here again, buses are used to a greater extent than ever before. We have also noted better family cars. I do not infer there is no room for further improvement, only that improvement has been made.

There has been a decrease in the in-migration of farm workers to Arizona in the last two years. Part of this decrease is attributed to the stricter regulations concerning vehicle equipment and part to the early plow-up date established to control the pink boll worm in cotton. We have also been told that if we could assure adequate family housing, workers who have stopped coming to Arizona would again include us in their annual work schedule.

During the fall and early winter months, we are a demand state, which means we need additional workers. In September, cotton farmers will provide or pay transportation to bring workers to the job from as far afield as Oklahoma or western Texas. In normal times, workers demanding transportation in late November and December met with resistance as usually 80 per cent of the cotton crop was harvested by the year's end. With the unusual conditions of the last two years, growers would provide late season transportation for a known crew; one who had worked for him before, but not for an unknown crew.

Many farm workers winter in Arizona and in the spring leave the area for sugar beet and other work in states to the north. A considerable number of our own Arizona resident farm workers leave home for the cooler states when the weather turns warm in late April or May.

Arizona becomes a supply state in the spring, and again, there is no problem concerning transportation. Sugar beet and other recruiters provide subsistence en route for the workers and assist the family head or crew leader with repairs, tires, etc. We have found that those Arizona crews who went north and who remained until the completion of the job usually were given a return subsistence allowance and were back home in early fall ready to begin the cycle again.

As you may see from the figures given you, family housing in Maricopa County is in extremely short supply, and other agricultural areas of the state are in the same condition. House trailers and simple portable structures might be considered as one means of improving the supply of on-farm housing. Mechanization will have an impact. One highly successful vegetable farmer has told us that in a few years crops will be harvested mechanically in the fields and packed or processed in refrigerated, dust-free sheds, resulting in a better product but utilizing fewer workers. However, until that day arrives, the migrant and local farm worker will need shelter suitable to human dignity.

Reducing the Need for Migrant Farm Labor

By

William H. Metzler
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Arizona

The figures cited in Migratory Labor in the West indicate that the peak number of migrant farm workers in California is nearly 60,000. Ten years ago, it was about twice that number.

The major factor in this change lies in the general economic condition in the country. Ten years ago a large number of ex-shipyard workers, ex-aircraft workers and ex-defense plant workers provided California with a plentiful supply of migratory labor. I was doing a survey at that time in Fresno County, California. The raisin-grape harvest there ordinarily lasts about three weeks. But at the end of one week that year, there wasn't a single raisin-grape to be picked in the entire county. The huge labor supply had harvested the entire crop.

This circumstance helps to point up the fact that there is no necessary relationship between the need for migratory workers and the number of such workers that may be present in a given area at a particular time. The general labor supply all over the country is so great that the migratory labor market can be flooded at any time, and the worker has no protection against it.

The first factor, then, in the reduction in number of migrant farm workers during the past decade is the general improvement in economic conditions.

The second factor in the reduction in number of migrants is the mechanization of some of the agricultural activities. We might note, however, the mechanization of the cotton harvest. Only the half-way mark has been reached in the mechanization of this crop, as the cotton growers are still inclined to do the first picking by hand and the second by machine. In other words, mechanization doesn't always go all the way in reducing the need for migratory labor. It may shorten the work season rather than reduce the number of workers needed. But mechanization has reduced labor needs, and we can expect further progress along these lines.

As we look over the history of migratory labor in the United States, we notice that at one time the big problem was the wheat harvest, with thousands of workers going up and down the Midwest. That is no longer a problem; it was solved by mechanization. The next big worry was sugar beets. But now that harvest is entirely mechanized, and the development of new types of seed and thinning machinery has improved the operation of the spring activities. In the not far distant future, the need for migrants to work sugar beets will be entirely eliminated.

We are noticing the increased use of mechanical snap-bean harvesters on the Atlantic Coast. I'm sure all of us will watch with great interest what this will do to the migrant pattern and the number of migrant workers on the Atlantic Coast.

Mechanization has both increased the farmer's income and had a very profound effect in reducing the number of migratory workers. It might be a good idea at conferences such as this to bring in the people who manufacture farm machinery and get them interested in moving ahead faster in the areas which currently require a great deal of manual labor.

The third factor in the decline of migratory labor is one that cannot be ignored. That is the fact that a large number of Mexican nationals are doing the work that domestic migratory workers used to do. We can't help but recognize that the importation program has a very marked effect on our farm labor supply situation. Local families tend to be discouraged by the presence of Mexican nationals in the best jobs in an area. The domestic worker stays at home or looks for some other type of work.

A fourth factor lies in the organization of the farm labor market. An interesting fact about the farm labor market is that local workers ordinarily lose out when migratory workers come to the area. Community after community that once depended on local labor now depends almost entirely on migrant labor. The migrant comes to an area a couple of weeks ahead of the harvest season and nails down the jobs. The local worker is discouraged and stays at home.

But important changes were made by the Employment Service during World War II. During the war, the Employment Service had to revise the farm employment system as a result of the acute shortage of migrant workers, and it did a very thorough job. The organization of the local labor market was improved by introducing the day-haul system. Now we find that in a great many communities, the local worker has obtained an advantage over the migrant worker. I could cite quite a number of communities in the United States that have a good local pool of workers and a well organized day-haul or drive-out system. You won't find migrant workers in those areas. Day-haul gives the local worker a decided advantage. The growers are happy to use the day-haul workers and get away from the headaches of providing housing and sanitation for migrant workers, and of coping with all the government officials that come out to see whether housing and other facilities are up to standard.

A fequently advocated approach to reducing the need for migrant labor is through the diversification of production in order to spread out farm work and encourage the development of a local, year-round labor supply. Farming communities should be extremely cautious in attempting this approach.

During the 40's, the farm labor committee in Tulare County, California, was very much concerned because of the tremendous number of local workers who were idle during the spring months, when there was very little farm work to do. The committee prevailed on some of the growers in the county to put in crops that would be harvested in the spring. Quite a number of the growers put in asparagus -- a commendable and public spirited thing for them to do. But as so often with people who have grand ideas, the committee had never tried out their idea nor thought of the possible consequences of pursuing it. When time came to market the asparagus, it was suddenly apparent there was no processing or distribution system to get the asparagus to market.

The trend in the United States is toward specialization, toward raising the kind of crops that grow best in a particular region. Also, specialization in crops arises from the availability of a local processing and distribution system especially equipped to handle a particular product or products. If a locality does not have a good processing and distribution system for a particular crop, farmers should be wary of raising it; the harvest may be at the farmer's own expense.

To expect the farmer to diversify his production as a solution to farm worker employment is expecting too much. If progress is to be made in this direction, it should be made at the public expense. If agricultural experiment stations will test a new crop in an area, determine how well it will grow and find out what is needed to get the processors and distributors to take the produce off the farmer's hands after he grows it, then addition of these crops would be practicable. For the farmer to experiment with diversification on his own will increase his expenses, disrupt established migration patterns, and make the migratory labor market less stable. Yet, it is a good goal when planned on a broader basis.

New migrant problems are arising in some areas. There is a trend away from general farming toward the specialized production of vegetables and fruits that do not lend themselves to mechanization. This is especially true in the northeastern and Lake states. The issues of the migrant problem are more troublesome there now than in the West, where migrant labor has been part of the farming situation for a long time. In these areas, part of the large number of persons moving from the rural South to the North are beginning to form the nucleus for local farm labor pools that will prove more satisfactory than seasonal migration from Texas. There is increasing reliance on local farm labor sources. Considerable numbers of Texas migrants are beginning to move their homes permanently to the North. Through planned, systematic day-haul procedures, this area can stay even on the migratory labor problem or even reduce its dimensions.

Social legislation is a further means of reducing the number of migratory workers. Take child labor, for example. One of the reasons that the Texas family moves out of the state is that it has a large labor supply in the family. The children are potential breadwinners, and the father wants them to get out and earn some money. According to the customs and traditions of these people, the father is supposed to teach his children good habits of work. The best way he knows how to fulfill this obligation is to put his children to work beside him in the fields. If we had a good child labor law that would stop the employment of children, the Texas migrant probably would stay at home. As it is, some states have child labor laws, and the Texas Mexican-American does not move into these states, but into states where the whole family can work. So uneven laws and their uneven administration contribute to erratic migration.

Unemployment insurance is another means of reducing migration. If a farm worker were covered by unemployment insurance, he would be more likely to stay at home, rather than to chase after rumors of employment.

Registration of crew leaders would have a similar effect. Too many people who do not particularly want to migrate to farm jobs in other areas are persuaded to do so by irresponsible crew leaders; with registration, we would have more responsible crew leaders and less migration.

Again, when we raise the standards for migrant housing and transportation, farmers become more interested in employing local labor, and demand for migratory labor is reduced.

The Employment Service is working toward a system of planned migration so as to move the right number of workers to the right place at the right time. It is having a good deal of trouble with farmers over-estimating their employment needs. They want to be sure that they will have enough labor to harvest their crops. However, the fact remains that wrong estimates can produce distortions in the labor market. The answer seems to lie in closer cooperation between the growers and the Employment Service. Improved communication can bring the estimates of labor needs more nearly in line with actual requirements, and labor can be moved when and where it is needed.

Organized Labor Views the Farm Worker Problem

By
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AFL-CIO Farm Labor Organizing Committee
California

Americans have been migrant laborers since before the Revolutionary War. As tinkers and salesmen, as traveling mechanics and harvest hands specialized in reaping, America's work force has been on the move.

This migrancy continues into modern times. Today, scores of thousands of craftsmen, construction workers, and technical engineers and even executives range the face of the globe. They are in Alaska and Antarctica; in South Africa and South America; in Egypt and Guam; in India and Iran and at a hundred other points.

These migrants, as compared with migratory farm laborers, present only a few special problems, which are generally rapidly resolved. Their children go to good schools, or have special provision made for them. These workers eat a nutritious diet, and live in decent housing. They enjoy social status; they partake of much of America's good life.

Differences Between Migrant Farm Labor and Other Migrant Labor

The difference in the status of migratory farm labor and other migratory labor is economic organization and recognition. A construction worker or engineer may travel 10,000 miles to the new job, but he knows the pay, the working conditions, the perquisites. There may be competition for the job itself, but the pay, the salary schedule, the conditions have been pre-negotiated. Self-organization with power of collective bargaining marks the one group; disorganization and relative impotence mark the other.

The differences are dramatic. An organized "cat-skinner" draws $3.79 per hour around Stockton, California (to go to $4.01 on July 1st) plus pensions, health and welfare, vacation, holidays and overtime.

Put a barbed-wire fence, visible or invisible, around that same piece of land, and call it a farm. That same cat-skinner, as an agricultural worker, will earn from 90¢ per hour to $1.25 or $1.50, with emphasis on the lower register of that scale. What a whale of a difference a little wire can make!

This basic difference in recognition of the social value of the two jobs rests, at bottom, on the degree to which the worker has been able to establish and maintain job status through organization.

There are many other differences between the two groups; differences whose origin lies in the fabric of society itself. We can touch but briefly on these in passing.

The Causes of Migrancy

Among the many causes of migrancy are the desire for steady -- or steadier -- employment, and wages, preferably higher wages. Employment, particularly seasonal employment, in farming is determined by crop and climate; over which the worker has no control. He must present himself when and where there is a need. While he is needed, he is vitally needed. When the crop is in, he is out.

Sociologists may speculate upon the effects of this rejection. Nothing is left to chance; the migrant farm worker is constantly reminded that he is the lowest man on the totem pole. Let us be semantically clear: he is called wino, drunk, hobo, delinquent, criminal, lazy, misfit, and undesirable, to list a few of his titles.

Certain changes in the agricultural economy induce migrancy. As farming becomes agribusiness, as corporate farms, aided by subsidies, and exploiting a passive labor force, swallow up family farmers, there is an enormous displacement of people.

Among the principal and valued crops of American farms is the crop of young men and women exported to the cities. There is no longer room for them, nor is there economic feasibility for their entering farming. There is another crop: that of men and women who sell out their farm holdings, for various reasons, and migrate to the cities. Then there is the grim crop of broken men and women, their working lives expended on the land, unable "to make it," their holdings and their hope lost.

All of these people look from outside in at an industrialized society for which they have little or no technological skill or preparation, a society already reducing its work force -- and facing new problems thereby -- through automation and technology.

For agribusinessmen to claim that it is industrial society which is driving these people "to migrant work because you and your fellow citizens in communities in which you reside have not permitted them to be educated and motivated to become an integral part of the permanent industrial or agricultural work force" is to evade the basic issue. Agriculture itself has created the greatest migration of modern times -- a migration, we might say, for which no policy or program preparation was ever made, unless you wish to count a major war as a program to absorb migratory labor.

In 1920, 32 million people on 6,448,343 farms produced our food and fiber. In 1957, about 21,000,000 people on 4,855,000 farms did that job for a considerably enlarged population. The farms produced another crop, too. More than 11,000,000 people left the land. Who harvested that crop? Who harvested the economic crop loss of more than 1.5 million individual farms which went out of existence?

That was -- is -- a migration! It is still in process. Read the figures of REA on power shut-offs to farms. Reason: Out of business.

There is no complete list of all the reasons for migrancy. So many reasons are given, from small to large, that wonder grows whether the total configuration has not been lost in the examination of a part. Certainly some migrants search for a place to let down roots. Minority-group workers may search for their place in the social sun. Some seek adequate housing or better living conditions. Some seek opportunity for family-group work to increase income. Some are lonely, homesick for familiar land and family. Be it noted, however, that almost everyone is in search, or has a hunger.

He has all these, and something else, too, to make him a migrant.

If it is true that machines are displacing workers on farms, and this seems to be quite clear (one farm worker in 1954 supported 18.7 persons as compared with 10.0 in 1930 and 4.1 in 1920) we must also look to and assess other factors of displacement. "Displace," used here, will mean "to crowd out, to take the place of."

There can be no serious question that the Mexican national program, under Public Law 78, 1951, as amended, has played a heavy role in displacement of domestic workers, is a severe wage depressant, and produces forced migration of farm labor.

Let agribusiness economists say what they will: the bracero force operates to upset the laws of economics. When labor is in short supply and wages should go up, the injection of Mexican nationals, like the governor on a steam engine, holds wages down.

The bracero system has done infinitely more. Agricultural towns in California's Imperial Valley are dying on the vine; the bracero has replaced the locals who were a payroll. Communities are withering, unable to generate the tax base from which to provide essential services; the bracero provides no tax base. The Mexican national program, like Sherman's march to the sea, has swept the countryside bare of domestic workers. Count the domestic workers in the Imperial Valley now. They have migrated, and many are still migrants!

Other states which have braceros may be able to say these same things. We speak of California, which we know, and we know that Texans, driven into migrant status by miserably paid braceroism, are flocking into California. Other states which have no braceros, such as Washington, and notably Oregon, may have a different story to tell.

Lest anyone charge that we speak from the heart through a hat, we hasten to quote authority. Good, accepted authority. In this Administration, almost unimpeachable authority.

Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell said in Chicago on November 22, 1959, "we are told that competitive forces will continue to push wages up and erase what we view as a problem, but competitive forces do not operate in an economy where an employer can create a false labor shortage by offering unacceptable wages, and then receive foreign workers to bring in his crop." That is, succinctly, a statement of a basic cause of labor migrancy.

Let us look at the record of California. In the latter half of 1957, with two exceptions occurring in June, here are the Mexican nationals as percentages of all seasonal workers, by selected counties and crops:

County	Crop (s)	Percentage of Nationals
Contra Costa	Lettuce	94.5%
Fresno	Melons	60.0
Imperial	Carrots	86.7
	Lettuce	93.8
	Melons	93.7
	Sugar beets	95.5
Los Angeles	Oranges	72.0
Merced	Figs	58.0
Monterey	Broccoli	83.3
	Lettuce	95.5
	Strawberries	81.8
Orange	Oranges	92.0
	Peppers	83.6
Placer	Pears	54.1
Riverside (East)	Cotton	84.8
	Dates	91.2
	Lettuce	92.4
	Melons	96.0
Riverside (West)	Olives	86.7
	Oranges	80.0
San Diego	Celery	94.5
	Snap beans	95.0
San Joaquin	Asparagus	78.7
	Celery	88.9
	Sugar beets	88.3

County	Crop (s)	Percentage of Nationals
(cont.)		
San Joaquin	Tomatoes	92.2
Santa Barbara	Lemons	94.2
Solano	Miscellaneous vegetables	91.8
Stanislaus	Strawberries	90.0
Sutter	Peaches	54.6
	Tomatoes	97.6
Ventura	Lemons	94.6
	Tomatoes	97.1
Yolo	Miscellaneous vegetables	94.9
	Sugar beets	97.9
	Tomatoes	95.7

SOURCE: California Department of Employment, Unpublished Data. DE881 Forms.

There, if you please, is displacement! And the California Department of Employment can, we are sure, give you more.

What of the wage impacts of braceroism, as a force in creating migrancy? We have made some studies, and these are available to you. In one of the Sacramento Valley, it is quite clear that using 1952 as 100 per cent of an index, farm wages in the Valley have fallen, standing at 98 per cent in 1959.

In another study of California's desert and border counties, the same kind of picture, only worse, is presented. The 1959 index of wages stands between 96 and 97 per cent.

Visualize yourselves if your wages, and those of other earners, had remained stable in this period, in the face of rising costs of living, let alone fallen, as have the wages of these farm workers!

There is no need for us to belabor the point. The physical and economic displacement effect of the bracero system is quite clear: under a hundred thousand braceros in California last year, under a half million in the whole United States.

And where free men must become bondsmen to compete with licensed and legalized serfs from a foreign land, there comes rootlessness and despair, there is moral blight, there is blunting the dignity which makes us, as the Eskimo puts it, "innuit" -- men, preeminently.

Approaches to the Problem

A primary force in bringing order and reason into a chaotic situation, and in creating the conditions under which migrancy can lose much of its cancerous quality, is the unionization of the labor force. It will help employers to organize, which they badly need to do. It will provide avenues of communication and collective bargaining, negotiated working conditions, standardization, and new responsibilities. It will give tremendous aid and stimulus to the development of a stable, responsible domestic labor force, and to the development of stable, responsible employers.

We need a new, bold approach to developing a domestic labor force in agriculture. How bold? Bold enough to envision and lay out a program which encompasses no braceros -- or nationals -- as a necessary part of that force. Bold enough to think in terms of treating agriculture as agricultural industry, with all the checks and balances -- and yes, fair returns down to the small farmer -- which that implies.

Boldness to think in new terms of housing, health and recreation;

of creating and developing mobile schools and health facilities for the children; new adult education programs. Boldness to create vast new training, retraining and rehabilitation programs to provide a modern work force for a most efficient industry.

There is need for boldness toward and faith, too, in the limitless capacity of man to develop, to create, to yield new cultural harvests, and harvest from his children the future, but as of now lost, teachers, scientists, technicians, workers, healthy, hardy citizens.

It can be done. We have done it elsewhere, in Tennessee, in the mountains of North Carolina by the TVA, in most of the free world. Even as we speak, pressures among agricultural workers are increasing. Through their unions they are learning to speak for themselves. They will help to write the history which even now peers over our shoulder. We venture to suggest that history will not ask -- or wait for the answer -- as to whether we or you tried to bend the law, or tried to alleviate the condition.

History will ask: Were the people fed? Did man achieve the potential in him?

We need new vision; we need new courage and daring to tackle the whole problem of migrancy, not just its parts. We need a reassertion of faith that this problem can be resolved.

The Migrant Worker in Relation to the Labor Problems of the Farmer

By
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I believe that the theme of my presentation can be disclosed by a quick look at the roster of this panel who are gathered here to discuss the highlights and the problem of migratory labor. As you all know, migrant labor is hired almost exclusively on the farms. The farmer is the employer, and the only reason that this migratory worker is able to escape from the poverty which he leaves is because some farmer or group of farmers is willing to give him employment. Generally, the reason he leaves his home, if he has one, is that no one else in his community is willing to offer him employment. It would seem to me that the problem of migratory labor is of most concern to the employer, who, after all, has had the most experience with this group of people and is the most vitally concerned. To my certain knowledge, if there are problems concerning the employees of an aircraft factory, these problems are generally a matter of discussion between the worker and the director of employment or even the president of the company. Today, however, in order to discuss the problem of the migrant farm worker, we have gathered here a doctor of medicine, a director of public welfare, a union organizer, an agricultural economist, a statistician, an education research specialist, a member of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, a state director of farm placement, and, lastly, a farmer.

I have watched with concern -- indeed horror -- over the years as a concerted effort is made to inflame an unenlightened public against the American farmer. He is systematically blamed by these people for starting and propagating nearly every social ill of the century.

Because he must mechanize to produce more efficiently for a rapidly expanding population, he is accused of throwing people out of work.

In operations where mechanization can't be employed, and he must depend on human labor, he is blamed for the hard work these people must perform.

When he efficiently uses the land to produce the best possible crops, he is accused of creating local seasonal labor shortages necessitating migration of workers.

If the workers bring their families, the farmer is accused of exploiting the women and children. If the worker leaves his family at home, the farmer is accused of breaking up homes.

If he builds housing for his workers, he is accused of regimenting human beings into labor camps. If he doesn't build housing, he is accused of neglecting his workers.

And on and on and on.......

But rarely is he pictured by these people as the most basic and simple type of American businessman trying to wrest a living from the American soil while he feeds her population. They will tell you the miseries endured by migrants, but will they tell you that the farmer has chosen the most hazardous of all undertakings?

Do they mention that natural catastrophes must be reckoned with 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for many, many months between soil preparation, planting and harvesting? Do they estimate how much money and sweat may be expended throughout the year only to find when the harvest is in that there is no ready market for the product?

No, these things are never mentioned. Nor is it pointed out that the farmer's greatest need in his never-ending battle against the elements is for conscientious -- and that also means happy and satisfied -- workers.

The industrial manager paces his workers with a machine, equips his machines with safeguards against human failure and, when the work-day is over, shuts off the machine, turns off the lights, locks the doors, and goes home for a good night's sleep secure in the knowledge that he holds the controls.

The farmer, on the other hand, must place his entire investment in the hands of his workers who must contend with nature's ways. One mistake in judgment when a flood is imminent can be his ruination. One error of omission or commission by his employees when emergency strikes suddenly can wipe him out.

Why then these hysterical inferences that the farmer is the natural enemy of his workers? I can think of no enterprise where employer-worker cooperation is more vital than it is in farming.

Many years ago, most Americans lived on farms. They raised their own food -- from beef to beans -- and enough extra to feed one or two people who didn't live on the farm.

Today, less than nine per cent of the American people live on the farm, but now each farmer feeds himself and 22 others.

With his non-farm "family" increasing and the cost of his production necessities rising at a rate unparalleled in history, the farmer will have to operate more efficiently or get out.

Farmers have met this ultimatum better than any other segment of our economy, yet they are the targets of hordes of critics who don't appreciate their contributions or understand their problems.

Should farmers falter and surpluses dwindle into shortages, the situation would become grim. Consumers, who up to now have "never had it so good," would be singing a "worried song."

On every side, we hear about the "population explosion." What is the greatest threat to America in the population explosion?

Our ability to build enough houses, highways or public buildings is questionable if our burgeoning population reaches its predicted peak. But there is a more dangerous and basic threat. What are Americans going to eat if population expansion exceeds agricultural productive capacity?

Conservative estimates indicate farmers will have to provide 36 per cent more eggs, 61 per cent more broilers, and 56 per cent more meat animals for Americans in 1975 to enjoy the same high standard of living as today. They will have to produce 60 per cent more fruits and vegetables, 48 per cent more dairy products, and 26 per cent more grain and potatoes.

So far, farmers have been able to keep up, and, in some cases, get ahead. Whether they can continue to keep pace with population, however, remains to be seen.

Farm efficiency has improved more in the past 18 years than in the preceding 120, but, like the golfer who has whittled his score down to the low 80's, improvement keeps getting harder.

Two developments could keep the farmer from succeeding.

One is the rapidly increasing cost of his necessities for producing a crop. When it is no longer profitable to farm, the farmer will move to the city.

Unsound or ill-advised legislation is another threat. Spurred by attacks on the farmer, Congress could hamstring his efforts for increased efficiency.

Either situation poses the threat of famine in this land of plenty.

Unfortunately, ill-advised legislation is a constant threat to the growers of this country. As recently as April 6th of this year, our Secretary of Labor in making an address to the National Travelers Aid Association, Washington, D.C., devoted his entire speech to villifying the farm employer and rattling the saber of corrective legislation that the Department of Labor would like to see undertaken, practically all of which would be highly prejudicial to the interests of the American farmer, and very little of which would be of any benefit to the worker. Not only the Secretary, but also other speakers in this field of migrant labor, iterate and reiterate that the nation faces a serious "farm labor problem."

They have built this alarming straw man up to such proportions that we hear it discussed on all sides, and reputable legislators even consider laws to remove this imaginary blot from our public conscience.

There is no denying that a problem exists, but it is the labor problem of the farmer -- not a problem of farm labor.

There is no problem of farm labor because there is no real significant group of people in our country who can be classed as farm laborers. The farm labor force is an ever-changing, shifting group of people, different this year from last, even different today from yesterday.

Thus, it is not the farm labor force which has the problem, but rather the farmer who has the problem of finding workers available and willing to do farm work when he needs them at pay rates which are based on their productivity rather than either their need or the number of hours they spend in the field.

This is not a selfish approach, as it may seem at first glance. The farmer-employer who comes into close daily contact with most of his workers, is more inclined to want to help his people raise their living standard, to provide fringe benefits, than is his industrial counterpart. The reason he does not accomplish more in this direction is because he cannot do so economically and survive, and because many of the beneficiaries of his humanitarianism neither want it nor appreciate it. Perhaps even more important is that the vast majority of farm workers in the United States want nothing which tends to tie them too closely to agricultural work. They want to remain free to move from place to place, to rest or loaf, or fish or play when they choose. For one reason or another, many prefer to limit their earnings in agriculture, to use farm work as a means of supplementing income from other sources.

So, if we look at the problem as one of helping the farmer solve his labor problem, of helping him reach the goal he is striving for -- that of being able to hire better workers with higher pay based on productivity, we will turn away from criticism of the farmer for his inability to overcome alone a series of conditions over which he has little control. We will concentrate our attention on correcting the causes of a continuing depression in agriculture which affects not only the worker but also the farmer.

All of which boils down to this simple truth -- you can't help the farm worker until you help the farmer. There is no source of added income for the farm worker -- outside of tax-supported welfare -- except that which comes to the farmer from the sale of his crops.

These problems of agriculture which affect everyone in our nation either as participants or consumers can be solved by all of our people working together. But it must be brought about by evolution -- not by a revolution stirred up by groups with a personal axe to grind.

It cannot be solved by forcing agricultural workers to organize into a belligerent mob with the hope of creating an industrial-type cold war between worker and farmer-employer.

There are many reasons why the industrial labor relations cloak cannot be forced onto the frame of agriculture, but the principal one is that industry is man-made, man-regulated. Agriculture is not. If pressures push wages up in industry, man adjusts his production methods to compensate for part of the added cost. The rest is passed along to the user in higher prices.

In agriculture, the real boss is Mother Nature. She makes the schedules, she controls the production methods. In industry -- if man cannot make a machine to make a product, he redesigns the product to suit his manufacturing processes. Unfortunately, it is a much longer process to persuade nature by cross breeding and genetic control to change the physical characteristics of her progeny. But as we all know, it is being accomplished, and if given time and not stampeded by an emotionally-disturbed population, we can find the solution, and agriculture may ultimately become as mechanized as industry. Even then, because we cannot house agriculture indoors, away from the weather, because we cannot stop her ripening and growing processes as we shut down a factory, it is doubtful that we can ever achieve the push-button automation which we will ultimately see in industry.

Many people talk continuously of "the ample reserve of domestic farm workers," willing and able to do farm jobs if wages are pushed high enough to attract them.

This claim is not supported by (1) history, (2) any responsible government agency, nor (3) by the experience of growers who in desperation have offered premium wages to save a threatened crop.

There is no such thing as a stable domestic agricultural work force, much less an adequate reserve willing, able, qualified, and ready to meet peak farm harvest work loads. Why?

1. As long as ample employment exists in industry, domestic workers will not do agricultural work, even at more money than industrial jobs pay.
    a. They will not leave homes or family ties in the city.
    b. They will not give up the chance to get another industrial job by leaving the city.
    c. They are generally not in physical shape to stay on the hard, physical jobs of farming.
    d. Industrial unemployment insurance encourages city workers to stay put, even during unemployment.
2. Most of those who may do agricultural work today in this area, will not be here tomorrow, or will be at work in jobs which offer more permanent employment. Farm jobs are of short duration, so workers must migrate to remain constantly employed in agricultural work, no matter what the rates of pay may be.
3. Those who remain in agricultural work are:
    a. A small group of skilled, strong workers who make earnings comparable to those in industry because of diligence at piece-work rates or because they qualify for the limited number of year-round salaried jobs on farms.
    b. The perpetual drifter or nomad who won't stay in one place.
    c. Those who are unemployable in any other endeavor and whom agriculture must accept to get its work done. They cannot be employed economically at other than piece rates.

As farmers, we do not oppose higher wages, better working conditions, better standards of living for farm workers. We want improvement in all of these things to come about as rapidly as they can be put on a pay-as-you-go basis.

We have never pretended that some inequities and a few evils do not still exist in agriculture. Our groups and other farm organizations are working to remedy these situations as rapidly as they are discovered, and we pledge continued effort to keep our houses clean. This is not altruistic; it is simply good business to maintain a friendly, helpful, mutually satisfactory relationship with our workers.

It is my firm conviction that from a sociological and moral standpoint, our country would be far better off if we had no seasonal, migrant laborers. I hope the day is not too far distant when technological improvements in harvest operations may make such seasonal migrations less important -- and, ultimately, unnecessary.

In the interim, I believe that everything possible should be done to educate the present-day migrant to become an integral part of the permanent industrial or agricultural work force and then provide gainful, permanent opportunities that would permit these people to sink their roots in the community of their choice, to realize the ideal and goal of every American -- a permanent home, a place in the community for themselves and their families.

We are indeed fortunate that during this period of transition we have available to us the supplemental foreign labor programs which should be continued and used as such in every sense of the word.

Federal-State Relationships

By
John J. Walsh
Executive Director, The President's Committee on Migratory Labor
Washington, D.C.

As you know, I am appearing before you today as Executive Director of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor. Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell, in his capacity as Chairman of the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, is my boss. Because Mr. Mitchell's name has been mentioned here this morning, I think it is necessary for me to take a few minutes out of my allotted ten to clear the record.

First, I'd like to quote for you two sections from Secretary Mitchell's speech before the Travelers Aid Society in Washington, D.C. -- the speech referred to by Mr. Zuckerman. I quote:

> We may have learned to use the tools of technology to dramatically increase agricultural production, but we have failed to use those tools of progress to benefit many of the men, women and children who labor for hire on American farms...
>
> In response to this position, recommendations have been made by farm employer organizations that would have the effect of making it the policy of the United States Government to help maintain (a) supply of underemployed and underpaid workers for the benefit of agricultural employers.

This does not constitute "villification of American farmers"; rather, it constitutes criticism of the institutionalized approach to farm labor problems by farm employer organizations.

Now, let me review with you some of the intergovernmental aspects of the migratory labor problem.

I. Need for Coordinated Approach

The manifold problems endemic to migratory farm workers cannot be resolved by any one authority. They are such as to require a systematic, integrated approach at all levels of government. Each division -- federal, state and community -- working in its area of authority and competence as part of a coordinated program, is able to contribute a vital part toward total solution. This is the teamwork approach advocated by the President's Committee on Migratory Labor, and by the many groups that have given careful study to these problems.

II. The Structure for Coordinated Action

The last few years have seen the emergence of a strong, identifiable movement toward the organized solution of migratory problems:

a. The President's Committee on Migratory Labor, created in 1954 to assume national leadership in improving the social and economic welfare of domestic migratory workers.

b. Twenty-eight official State Committees on Migratory Labor, established for the purpose of determining and initiating suitable remedial actions in this field.

c. Many hundreds of official and quasi and unofficial community councils and committees that render a variety of direct services to migrants.

III. How the Structure Works

a. The President's Committee: Working within its mandate, the Committee acts as a focal point on all matters concerning migrants, and provides or arranges for technical and advisory services requested by state committees on migratory labor. The PCML develops guidance and aid materials for use by state and community groups, and even for migrants. It also develops proposals for legislative actions, and through informational media, keeps migrant committees posted on developments in the migrant field. Recent and present areas of activity include:

1. Development of a proposal for national registration of crew leaders and labor contractors.
2. Development of a proposal for establishment of rest camps on major migratory routes.
3. Development of procedures for meeting emergency and disaster needs of migrants. (Guide)
4. Study of problems of family migration. (Research)
5. Responsibilities of workers living in camps. (Guide)
6. Development of a plan to help stabilize migrants. (Known as the "Employment Opportunities Forum for Migrants," two pilot projects are underway in San Antonio, Texas, and Belle Glade, Florida, through cooperative arrangements with the two state committees on migrant labor.)

b. The federal departments related to the President's Committee (Labor; Agriculture; Interior; Health, Education and Welfare; Housing and Home Finance): Roughly 17 bureaus of these departments deal directly with their counterparts in the states; fuller utilization of existing federal and state resources has resulted from this direct relationship, particularly in the fields of health, education and employment. Current special departmental activities include: study of residence laws; study of agricultural wage structures; development of proposals for meeting housing needs of migrants; and participation in special migrant health projects.

c. The state committees on migratory labor: These committees are considered the most effective mechanism for examining the problems and needs of migratory workers, and for initiating corrective action within the states. Often, their membership includes representatives from farmer, civic, church and labor groups. Most state legislative proposals in respect to migratory labor originate with the state committees. The President's Committee looks to the state committees for information on significant areas of need, emerging problems, and recommendations for action at the federal level.

In 1959, committee legislative proposals probably fared better than ever before -- 17 states introduced 40 bills; 20 were passed by 11 states. Most state committees came into existence in the last three to four years, so, for many state committees, 1959 was too close to permit seasoned action. There are many indications that 1961 will be a still better year.

d. The community councils and committees: These groups give excellent services to migrants at the "grass roots." Often of church-civic group origin or composition, the local agencies in many areas have become formalized in recent years by including local government agencies. Having first-hand knowledge of migrant problems, the local groups can be of inestimable value to state migrant labor committees in formulating program comment and direction.

IV. Supporting Action

In 1959, the Joint Federal-State Action Committee, composed of high-level persons of the state and federal government -- cabinet officers and governors -- confirmed mutual understandings on certain issues of migratory labor. These issues and the Committee's recommendations are embodied in the conference background informational pamphlet. This was a signal step, particularly in clearing up doubts as to federal and state areas of responsibility.

V. Summary

As long as we have migrants in their present economic status, they will be in constant need of some assistance. And wherever they are, no one division of government can be wholly responsible. The problems of migratory labor cannot be resolved in Washington, D.C., neither can they be completely resolved in the separate states. But they can be effectively reduced through intelligent teamwork of the federal, state and local governments.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND ULTIMATE GOALS IN MIGRATORY LABOR POLICIES

By
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Public behavior concerning migratory labor is remarkably similar to the proverbial action about the leaky roof. If it is raining and there are leaks, the logic is pots and pans. Later, when the sun shines and the pots have been restored to normal uses, the rational thing is a new roof or the essential external repairs. Nevertheless, as the proverb says, the prospect of the rational thing being done diminishes as memory of discomfort fades away in the pleasant after-storm sunshine. Yet, a day of action must come, for the leaks that once were little more than a nuisance may some day bring down the plaster ceiling -- perhaps on the grand piano.

In a similar way, public policy for migratory workers must be concerned both with what needs to be done today and what must be planned today for doing tomorrow. Among persons familiar with the problems of migratory labor, the allegory scarcely needs further development to emphasize the tendency for emergencies of today to engage attention at the expense of more fundamental reconstructions of tomorrow. In short, there is almost always a storm somewhere, and we become so occupied with moving pots that little time is left for fixing roofs.

Migratory labor, as well as the larger category of all seasonal farm labor, is a complex of improvisations. In this complex, labor supplies that are disorganized and unplanned come into conjuncture with labor needs that are equally disorganized and unplanned. Crops are planted with virtually no concern as to whether there will be a supply of labor or where it will come from. In fact, this tendency has developed to such an extent that farm employers have come to expect that their national and state governments owe them a labor supply. On the other side, migratory and seasonal labor supplies are assembled not by the affirmative force of occupational preference, but by negative forces that exclude from other occupational selections; lack of skills, physical and mental ill health, and discrimination are among the more prominent negative forces. Migratory labor represents not so much an occupational category as a backlog of unsolved social problems. As there are virtually no obstructions to entry into the farm labor force, it provides a respite for those who have no better choice. Reciprocally, farm employers have come to expect that there will be a marginal labor supply left over from other occupations which will be available to them. During recent years of relatively full employment, this expectation has tended to break down, thereby creating the basis for importation of alien labor.

Cause and effect relationships in seasonal farm employment are obscure. It has been said repeatedly that the reason for migratory labor is that the nature of agriculture is such as to require it -- that it is logical and a rationale of the labor market that people should follow the pattern of crop maturities. Such an explanation fails on two grounds: First, it does not square with the facts that have been well documented by sociologists that migrants usually are impelled into their movements by negative and adverse circumstances rather than by positive inducements; second, this explanation fails to acknowledge the fact that non-migratory workers perform a major and increasing proportion of all seasonal farm work, and moreover, that non-migratory workers obtain a larger average number of days of farm employment than do migrants.

The fact that distinguishing between cause and effect in migrancy is difficult does not make it any the less essential. It is a distinction that is essential to productive thinking about ultimate goals. It is scarcely to be disputed that a high correlation exists between migrancy and poverty. But, are people poor because they are migrants, or are they migrants because they are poor? Let us assume that the society's goal in regard to the poverty of migrants is the same as for all other segments of the population -- namely, to identify the causes of poverty and to increase self-dependence to the point that poverty is eliminated.

Now, if one believes that the sources of poverty are in the structure of farm employment, he would likely emphasize such remedial measures as a minimum wage, diversification of crops, stabilization of employment, and other ways to increase incomes earned in agriculture. On the other hand, if one views the causes of migrant poverty as being handicaps and disabilities inherent in the persons involved, his long-range solutions will emphasize such matters as occupational training, vocational rehabilitation, corrections of mental and physical ill health, and the avoidance of discrimination in non-farm employment.

In order to dramatize the differences in the actions that might be invoked under these alternative hypotheses, let us embark on lines of reasoning on the prospective impacts to be incurred under each. First, let us take the proposition that the roots of poverty lie in farm employment, as such. Migratory workers who did 25 days or more of farm work annually have in recent years gotten an average of 115 to 125 days of farm employment per year at average earnings per day ranging from $6.40 to $8.00 (national data). These data alone establish the prima-facie bases of poverty. On this evidence, the indicated lines of action are against fragmentary employment and substandard wages. One of the most direct procedures against substandard wages that modern societies have devised is the statutory minimum wage; the most effective procedures against fragmentary employment are the decasualization schemes such as have been adopted for dock and port workers. The effect of these decasualization schemes has been to identify an eligible labor force and to allocate the work among those eligible. In the major ports of the western world, the issue of a large "struggling crowd" being able to eke out a subsistence, as against an organized force being able to earn a livelihood, has clearly been resolved in favor of the latter. In some instances, the initiative has been taken by government, and in other instances, it has occurred under collective bargaining. Even though the situation of agriculture is compounded by being seasonal as well as casual, it is nevertheless true that those who know the extent of disorganization in farm labor markets are uniformly convinced that counterpart decasualization measures could substantially improve employment and incomes. Additionally, with rationalization and stabilization, unemployment insurance also becomes feasible.

I am not at the moment proposing either a minimum wage law, or a decasualization scheme, or unemployment insurance. I am now attempting no more than to identify the types of actions that might logically be invoked if there were a deliberate public policy to proceed against the prima-facie bases of poverty that reside in the wage and employment structures of agriculture. To reason further about the impacts of such possible actions, let us assume that actions were undertaken that would increase sharply the over-all cost of temporarily employed labor. One impact would undoubtedly be a sharp reduction in the aggregate man-hours of hand labor used and an even sharper reduction in the number of persons employed. In short, many seasonal farm workers would be displaced. In our culture, such an outcome is traditionally acceptable -- it is just an episode of the still-continuing Industrial Revolution. As a normal expectation, we anticipate that economic growth and occupational mobility will absorb those displaced.

But recall that we started this line of reasoning with the possible hypothesis that the roots of poverty were in the structure of employment rather than in the attributes of the labor force. If this hypothesis were false, then the impact of displacement would likely be quite severe. When those who are opposed to a minimum wage in agriculture state that it would prevent the use of marginal workers, they are making an argument which is essentially correct. Attempting to solve the poverty problem by proceeding directly against the wage and employment structure is likely to have the effect of rapidly forcing a large number of chronically unsolved social problems more clearly into the open. Whether this is bad or good depends mainly on whether agencies responsible for occupational training, vocational rehabilitation, mental and physical ill health, and other matters related to occupational competence are prepared to absorb the impact.

Let us now consider the possible alternative hypothesis and examine the impacts if lines of action were to be taken against the disabilities and incapacities of the migratory and seasonal work force. Under this hypothesis, we would leave the structure of farm wages and employment alone while undertaking those therapeutic actions necessary to prepare the work force for more rewarding occupations. As these therapies are applied -- and to the extent of their success -- the migratory and seasonal labor force will decline, at least as long as relatively full employment prevails. If a decreasing labor supply were to invoke competition for labor, some of the wage and income effects outlined in the preceding hypothesis would be felt as indirect results. However, as long as the provisions of P. L. 78 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 are utilized as they have been, alien contract workers will be brought in to maintain the level of supply, and the potential force of competition will continue to be nullified. Consequently, farm employment conditions would tend to remain static, and as domestic workers were qualified to enter other occupations, the supply would be replenished with temporarily imported non-immigrant aliens. Assuming the success of this line of action and the continuance of present programs, we could quite realistically anticipate the day -- possibly not more than ten years away -- when the labor markets of agriculture nationally would approach the degree of alien saturation that now prevails in Imperial and San Diego Counties of California. I will leave the question of whether this is bad or good to your individual judgments, with merely the notation that this procedure did not eliminate poverty, though it did shift its clientele.

My purpose in presenting these alternative hypotheses was not to develop an argument for either one. It was only in the hope of distinguishing more clearly between cause and effect in the obscure complex we loosely identify as migratory labor and to do so in terms of the prospective outcomes from lines of action initiated under either hypothesis.

The implication intended in the title of my talk and in the allegory of the leaky roof was that in migratory labor policies, ultimate goals should not be neglected while relieving immediate needs. My case for this conclusion rests mainly on the proposition that being competitively competent and self-reliant are basic American ideals. If these are fundamental and universally accepted goals, they imply that capital investment in human beings to enhance their productivity is to be preferred over measures of relief. In most realms of national life, this would be no more than a tiresome cliche. But in agriculture, this proposition has extraordinary potence, for it applies as much to farm employers as to workers. Moreover, it applies to policies that, perhaps unintentionally, have had the effect of delaying and possibly diminishing the competitive competence and self-reliance of both workers and employers. I say these things in the belief that we have neglected corrective social measures because we have let the needs for them become obscured in the disorderliness of migrancy. At the same time, through a series of relief measures and temporary expedients, we have maintained an environment which has allowed the competitive competence and self-reliance of farm employers to decline. We have relieved farmers from meeting the generally prevailing requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act; we have relieved them of the burden of unemployment insurance; we have relieved them of some of the possibilities of having to face collective bargaining; finally, by government sanction of, and participation in, foreign labor importation, farm employers have been relieved of virtually all responsibilities of recruiting and retaining their labor supply.

In taking each of these steps, legislators and administrators were convinced of immediate need. Most of these actions were intended only to be temporary. But in public policies, as in public buildings, temporariness sometimes acquires incredible longevity. In any event, what I am attempting to say is that, although the intent of each step was undoubtedly otherwise, an unfortunate long-run effect of these series of relief measures has been to put farm employers in an increasingly deteriorating position as regards recruiting and retaining labor.

If those who have responsibilities to make and administer policies believe in the ultimate goals I have outlined, they will probably find it advantageous to proceed simultaneously toward capital improvements in the labor force and in the structure of employment. In respect to the work force, this is mainly a matter of extending and accelerating the programs already in use.

In respect to capital improvements in the structure of farm employment, new directions are required. I am convinced that if anything is to be accomplished, it must start with the termination of the foreign labor programs. As the Consultants to the Secretary of Labor have found, the Mexican national program has obstructed progress in the working conditions of domestic farm workers. The Consultants concluded that "renewal of P.L. 78 without changes in 1961 would almost certainly tend to postpone the adoption of necessary reforms and would tend to increase rather than diminish the shortage of domestic farm labor." I believe the factual basis and the logic of this conclusion are not objectively disputable. The recommendations of the Consultants are reflected in Mr. McGovern's bill, H.R. 11211 which, among other things, provides for gradual termination of Mexican labor importation to June 30, 1966. An established termination date is important, for without it, the potential of importation will obstruct the "necessary reforms" to which the Consultants referred.

Following upon a firm decision to become self-reliant in labor supply can logically come the steps to narrow the gap between prevailing standards of employment as between agriculture and the rest of the economy. This means, among other things, extension to farm workers of the employment standards from which they have been discriminatorily excluded. These extensions can come gradually and thus allow for economic and technological changes to be introduced to raise the productivity of farm workers.

Not until the gaping differences in standards of employment and levels of productivity have been substantially narrowed will there begin to emerge the bases upon which those in the farm labor force can earn a living at it and those who hire them can become competitively competent to attract and retain the labor they need.

CLOSING ADDRESS

By
Newell Brown
Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Manpower
Washington, D.C.

For the first time to any significant degree, the farm labor problem has, in the past six years or so, intruded upon the conscience and consciousness of the American people generally. This development, with its dramatic sociological and economic implications, is no news, of course, to you who are assembled here. This conference is, in fact, one clear evidence of an increasingly obvious fact. The hitherto disinterested in America are becoming increasingly interested; the day is gone forever when farm labor is a subject reserved to farmers and their organizations, farm workers and their scattered and barely articulate sympathizers, a handful of economists and statisticians, and a few government agencies.

During Secretary Mitchell's administration of the Department of Labor, more remedial action has been taken than ever before in history. A review of what has transpired to date, of where we presently are, and of what the future may hold would seem to be in order. Such a review suggests to me that already the hour for crucial national decision is at hand. I should like to take the next few minutes to explore with you the premises on which I base this tentative conclusion -- in a sense, to test it out.

Three distinct and relevant progressions, it seems to me, are coming to a head simultaneously. They are: first, the efforts of government to deal with the farm labor problem without new legislation; second, the tolerance of vocal farmers and their organizations for changes from the historic pattern; (note here and throughout I am talking of professions, not practice); third, the growth and cooperation of the widely varied groups who speak for the farm worker. In addition, and not a matter of happenstance, Public Law No. 78, governing the importation of Mexican workers and a key factor in any comprehensive decision-making, expires unless renewed on June 30, 1961.

First, let us examine what government has been doing. Some of its activity goes back to 1954. The list of significant action is impressive, I think:

1. Social security has been extended to many farm workers.

2. At the initiative of the Secretary of Labor and under his chairmanship, the President's Committee on Migratory Labor has been established.

3. The Rural Development Committee, at the federal level, has been in existence for a number of years and was recently made permanent by Executive Order.

4. Stronger interstate motor carrier safety regulations, developed by the President's Committee, have been established.

5. Suggested housing regulations, developed by the President's Committee, have been widely accepted by the states.

6. Twenty-eight states now have migratory labor committees, an increase of 21 in the last few years.

7. An "Annual Worker Plan" has been established and this year will assist

upwards of 40 per cent -- 200,000 -- of domestic migratory workers.

8. Improved regulations governing the use of the Employment Service in the interstate recruitment of American seasonal farm workers have been promulgated and put into effect.

9. A wide variety of improved controls and standards, including those affecting housing, feeding, transportation, wages and health, have been established for Mexican and other foreign workers, with indirect but important impact on domestic farm hands.

10. A number of states have instituted important improvements in connection with housing, transportation, crew leader control and other facets of the problem.

11. A substantial number of dedicated people in government -- federal, state and local -- have studied all phases of the problem, and have taken and are taking important steps toward their resolution.

This listing is suggestive rather than comprehensive, of course. It does, I think, make two points. Government has taken some important steps, and they have been made, with few exceptions, without amendment of long-existing legislative authority. Some added steps are doubtless possible within existing authorities and with added funds, but not enough to remedy the many remaining, pressing and obvious defects.

Conceivably, many of the remaining curative measures could be undertaken by farmers themselves, or by government at levels lower than the federal. The possibility is conceivable only. A reading of the pertinent history and the very nature of many of the remaining problems makes it clear, I think, that resolutions depending on these sources would be at best uneven, often inadequate and long in coming.

Having largely exhausted its administrative remedies and seeing no reasonable alternatives, the Department of Labor has readied some legislative proposals and is preparing others, which, in combination, would constitute an historic stride towards remedying many remaining defects. The proposals include amendments to Public Law No. 78, based on the Report of the Consultants, of which I believe you are all aware; a crew leader registration bill, already before Congress; and a bill to provide overnight rest stop facilities for migrant workers. In addition, the Department of Labor is releasing a study at the end of this month which will show that the extension of the minimum wage is both feasible and desirable. It will show also that such legislation would apply to only a few large farm employers who hire a substantial proportion of farm labor in the United States. Also, a study of the application of unemployment insurance to farm workers is in progress.

Such, in brief, is the progression of government in the farm labor field to date. It is ready for major decisions in the coming year, decisions which are vital if there is to be further progress.

The second progression I suggested was connected with the tolerance of vocal farmers and their organizations to change.

The concrete steps taken by government I have noted above, constitute one measure of this tolerance. In some cases, these farmers have cooperated or have been prime movers in these steps. In others, they have acquiesced at the outset, or after initial opposition, they have gone along. In still others, which I will discuss in greater detail later, they remain opposed.

Another and quite recent measure of their tolerance is the recommendation of the American Farm Bureau Federation to its affiliated State Farm Bureaus that they consider state legislation to: (1) improve housing standards for migratory workers; (2) extend occupational insurance to farm workers; (3) license farm labor contractors; (4) enact safety standards for truck transportation of farm workers; (5) insure availability of school facilities to children of migratory workers; and (6) establish minimum age restrictions for the employment of minors in agriculture.

Altogether, it cannot be argued, on the record, that collectively the vocal farmers have been wholly unresponsive to the farm labor problem. A few have been among the leaders for reform. If we confine ourselves to this evidence, there would be grounds for hoping that continued progress would be tolerated, provided that it took into consideration the very real and impelling economic, seasonal, market, and like factors which confront the farmer.

But other facts do appear. Individuals and organizations representing the vocal farmers have just now moved to turn back the clock on reform. I refer to their strong support of bills presently before the Congress which would dilute the responsibility of the Secretary of Labor to assure that the importation of Mexican workers does not adversely affect the wages and employment opportunities of domestic workers; and would deprive the Secretary of Labor of his clear present authority to make rules and regulations bearing on the recruitment of both Mexican and domestic farm workers. The Administration, as you know, has taken the position that there should be no amendment, including simple extension, of Public Law No. 78 in this Congress, to provide more time for study of suggested amendments; and that the recently promulgated domestic recruitment regulations should be allowed to stand. The contrary views of spokesmen for the vocal farmers, however, are clear.

From this set of facts, the conclusion seems inescapable that the tolerance for reform of vocal farmers, and those who speak for them, has been exhausted; insofar as additional federal action is concerned, the progression has reached an end. What concrete improvements will result from Farm Bureau Federation recommendations for state action remains to be seen.

Related to this progression -- the tolerance of vocal farmers -- is the growing question of whether the basic interests of all farmers and especially the little farmers, the family farmers, are, in fact, represented by the farm spokesmen who oppose action which directly or indirectly would improve the wages and working conditions of farm laborers. Note that I have invariably heretofore used the word "vocal" in referring to farmers. I am not convinced that these speak, as they purport to, for millions of small farmers, who perhaps have not yet thought the matter through and thus are inarticulate or "go along." In sum, the best available data show that over half the nation's four and one-half million farmers hire no labor at all, and another third spend no more than $500 a year on farm labor, the equivalent of one man part time. It is difficult to conceive how this group, a great majority of all farmers, would intentionally oppose action which could only increase the returns on their own labor and that of their families, or alternatively, provide better wages if they hired out their services.

The prognosis here is cloudy. As of today, the evidence is not conclusive that the little farmer is carefully appraising his actual interests relative to the large farmer in the field of labor. He may not be heard from as an independent voice for some time.

Finally, I suggested that the several non-governmental groups who speak for the farm worker have recently grown in numbers and are working more closely and effectively together. These are the church groups, the labor movement, civic organizations, small rural businesses, a few growers and at least one farmer organization, the Farmers Union. The degree of progression toward ultimate effectiveness is not clear; but, based on the showing of some of these groups before recent Congressional hearings, and assuming that they continue along the lines recently established, they will individually and collectively be a force to be reckoned with in coming years.

Thus, with much remaining to be done, as 1960 opens, to raise farm labor in this country to an economic and social status which is tolerable from any point of view, we find, I think, that a setting has been established which will make major decisions for better or worse almost inevitable in the next year or two.

To summarize, the setting includes: Government at the federal level, and in some cases at the state level, checkmated to a large extent by lack of legislative authority from further advance, but with proposals ready or on the drawing board which would remove the roadblocks; the vocal farmer community having decided apparently that further federal action should be flatly opposed, though possibly open-minded to state action in some areas; the possibility that the little farmer, whose self interest would seem clearly served by whatever improved the economic status of the hired worker, will recognize this fact and be heard from independent of, and presumably in opposition to, his larger articulate neighbors; and the fast-growing strength and coordination of effort of the private groups who speak for farm labor. To touch off the debate, decision must be reached before July 1, 1961, on whether and with what amendments Public Law No. 78 is to be extended.

This confluence of circumstances must give all parties to the debate considerable pause. While in the long run this country will not tolerate, cannot tolerate, the status quo, there is nothing certain about the upshot of the immediately impending debate. Retrogression is a possibility. So is reform action which is so extreme and ill-conceived as to discredit its promoters and thereby halt sensible progress for possibly years. A stalemate is another possibility. This would not only halt vitally needed reform now, but also would produce, in temporarily damming pressure for progress, a growing head which could be, when it does break through, as it inevitably will, destructive rather than constructive.

If this line of thinking has validity, I wonder whether it doesn't suggest to the parties to the debate a number of questions:

Can either side, in view of the uncertainty of the outcome and the long-run horse-sense of public opinion, allow itself to be lined up single file behind its extremists?

Can either side afford to allow the present trend toward ignoring the voice of the other to continue?

Is either side sufficiently sure of its strength and rectitude to rule out the possibility of compromise, in some areas at least, compromise which recognizes at once the critical need for prompt and major action on behalf of the farm worker and also the necessity of considering the transitional problems of his employer?

One thing seems to me certain. The time is not far distant when the American farm laborer will be restored to a position of equality with other working Americans. This is not the issue. The issue is whether this inevitable end will be accomplished in a contest of bitterness, brass knuckles and distrust, or of maturity, forbearance and reasonableness.

BUSINESS SESSION

Following a brief recess after the close of Secretary Brown's remarks, the Conference reconvened with Representative W. B. Barkley of Arizona presiding. He called on Senator Herrick S. Roth of Colorado to present the discussion chairmen's statement. Senator Roth presented the following summary:

> Under the auspices of the Western Governors' Conference with the cooperation of the American Public Health Association, the President's Committee on Migratory Labor and the Council of State Governments, heads of state departments of health, education, welfare, employment, labor and agriculture; chairmen of state House and Senate committees which deal with legislation in these fields, and other state officials were invited to participate in the Western Interstate Conference on Migratory Labor as delegates. People from federal health, education, welfare, housing and agriculture agencies and representatives of private groups concerned with the health, education and welfare of migrant workers and their families were invited to attend as resource persons.
>
> In six concurrent discussion groups, the delegates and resource persons have reviewed a variety of difficult and complex questions relating to migratory labor. On many matters there were strong differences of opinion. On few, if any, questions was there full and complete agreement. In all the discussion groups, divergent points of view were vigorously defended. The following points reflect generally the consensus as reported by the chairmen and reporters of the six discussion groups.
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> 1. In all groups, a majority favored in principle the establishment of a federal minimum wage for agricultural workers, provided that minimum wage legislation would not undermine incentives contained in current piece work arrangements. It was agreed also that attention must be given to improving farm income to offset any increases in production costs that may result from minimum wage legislation.
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> 2. All groups agreed that the employment of children in agriculture should not interfere with their education or their general health and welfare. Where children are employed in agriculture outside school hours, there should be careful supervision of their work and the conditions of employment.
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> 3. Although it was recognized that it presently is necessary to import contract workers from Mexico, a majority felt that the use of foreign nationals is not desirable as a long-range practice and should be terminated as soon as practicable. To achieve this goal, positive efforts should be made to recruit and maintain a permanent domestic farm labor force, and care should be taken that the importation of foreign contract workers not adversely affect the employment opportunities, wages and working conditions of domestic farm workers.
>
> 4. It was felt that expanded use of the annual worker plan on a regional basis should be encouraged. To assure more effective services to migrants, education, health and welfare programs

should be coordinated with the annual worker plan.

5. It was agreed that some system of crew leader and labor contractor registration and regulation should be developed.

6. There was general agreement that workmen's compensation coverage should be extended to all agricultural workers.

7. Because of administrative difficulties and actuarial problems stemming from the nature and duration of agricultural employment, it is questionable whether unemployment compensation coverage for agricultural workers is practicable. However, it was felt that unemployment compensation coverage for agricultural workers would be desirable, and further study is needed, particularly as to the practicability and feasibility of providing continuity of worker insurability through regional arrangements or compacts.

8. Migrant children should be afforded the same educational opportunities as other children. The additional costs to local school districts of providing such educational opportunities should be shared by all levels of government -- federal, state and local. Residence requirements which bar children of migrants from public schools should be eliminated, and compulsory education laws should be strictly enforced. Attention should be given to the special needs of migrant children.

9. The migrant should be considered as and treated as any other member of the community entitled to all welfare services. Where it is necessary to expand regular welfare facilities to meet particular problems of migrants, this should be done through state and local action calling on federal aid if necessary.

10. Health facilities should be made available to agricultural migrant workers and their families wherever they are located. The basic financial support must come from local, state or federal sources as may be arranged. Interstate and intrastate regulations governing health conditions, transportation and housing facilities for domestic migrants should be at least as adequate as the present controls for the foreign nationals program.

Following Senator Roth's presentation, the Chair recognized Representative Tom James of Texas. Stating that the main purpose of the Conference was educational and that any report or recommendations might be misconstrued or misused, Representative James moved that the Conference issue no report or recommendations, but that the delegates go back to their respective states and work for the solution of the problems discussed at the Conference. The motion was seconded.

The Chair then recognized Senator Roth of Colorado. The discussion chairmen's summary, he said, was not a statement of findings and recommendations, but a summary of the problems discussed and the viewpoints expressed. He proposed as a substitute motion that the discussion group chairmen's summary be made a part of the Conference Proceedings. The motion was seconded.

After further discussion, the Chair recognized Senator George Parkhouse of Texas, who said that the summary statement had been adopted by the six discussion chairmen and reported to the Conference and, therefore, would be carried in the Proceedings along with the speeches. Noting that a vote by the delegates would give the statement a status that was not intended, he moved that the Conference adjourn. The motion was seconded.

The Chair ruled that the motion to adjourn took precedence and called for a vote by the delegates. The motion carried, and the Conference adjourned.